Community Radio and Empowerment of Women among Pastoralist Communities in Northern Kenya

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Abstract

This paper focuses on the contribution of a community radio (Serian Radio) to community empowerment of women among pastoralist communities in Northern Kenya. A multi-stage sampling technique was used to select 4 divisions for the study. Data was gathered to determine the extent to which women participate in Serian FM programmes, productions that address the various issues facing Samburu women and the challenges faced by Serian FM in addressing various issues facing Samburu women. The paper established that Serian radio has worked to improve awareness and knowledge to solutions of community challenges and women issues in particular. The station has proved to be appropriate medium that has facilitated an interface   It is recommended that regular feedback from the listening public is essential in identifying listeners' preferences and the taste of various listeners segments (youth, women, men, aged, etc) and to avoid politics and religion.

Keywords: Community Radio, Northern Kenya, Women empowerment, pastoralist communities.

Introduction

The provision of information and skills has gained popularity in the quest to empower communities with Community Radio (CR) as a unique and effective tool. Chapman et al (2003) indicate that the growth of rural radio stations reflects both the improvements in information technologies and the shifting of development paradigm towards a more participatory style of information and knowledge transfer. Kumar (2004) identified radio as an avenue for participatory communication and as a tool relevant in both economic and social development.

Community radio is not-for profit and provides a mechanism for facilitating individuals, groups, and communities to tell their own diverse stories, to share experiences, and in a media rich world to become active creators and contributors of media. In many parts of the world today, community radio acts as a vehicle for the community and voluntary sector, civil society, agencies, NGOs and citizens to work in partnership to promote community development. By the core aims and objectives of this model of broadcasting, community radio stations often serve their listeners by offering a variety of content that is not necessarily provided by the larger commercial radio stations.

Community radio can play a significant role at the grass roots level for rural development. For instance, issues of poverty, agriculture, gender inequality, education, social problems among others could be the focus for programming. In exploring the importance of sharing information locally and the opening up of wider information networks for farmers in Northern Ghana with reference to vernacular radio programmes, Chapman et al (2003) found that rural radio is effective in improving the sharing of agricultural information by remote rural farming communities. Radio in this regard provides a set of participatory communication techniques that support agricultural extension efforts by using local languages to communicate directly with farmers and listeners' groups. Using the Most Significant Change (MSC) process, Waters et al (2011) assessed the impact of community radio in Indonesia and concluded that effective radio activities can make a significant change in a community's life. The MSC methodology has its origins in community health development debates. It has recently been applied to community radio impact evaluation. By the MSC process, community members provide feedback in the form of stories describing the desirable change in their life as a result of the activities of the radio.

Community radio and community development

Through media skills training and access to the airwaves, a community radio facilitates a number of capacity building activities. The exchange of information, networking of groups, the provision of skills and training and these undoubtedly are key elements of developing a community. Again, a radio facility for a community facilitates the promotion of awareness of community groups and facilities in the area as well as providing the avenue for the empowerment of these groups to use radio to promote themselves and to speak directly to the community. For its proximate location to its clients a Community Radio serves a local community of its interest. It is accessible to the community in terms of ownership, decision making and programme output. In majority of cases, programming is produced by the community, with focus on local concerns and issues. Unlike in the case of the mainstream media, rather than merely talking about the community, the people themselves make the programmes. This strengthens local culture with the recognition that this is their station; it becomes a forum for a wide diversity of local opinions and views. Sterling el at (2007) provided evidence that female community radio listeners are given a voice with which to respond to programming and to create programming content. The authors estimated the cost of excluding women from ICT for development and explored how community radio represents an opportunity for inclusion. By employing the principles of Participatory Action Research (PAR), the authors found that women will be more likely to benefit from technology-mediated opportunities for development if they themselves produce information that contributes to their advancement, rather than simply consuming information provided by others (Sterling et al 2007).

Oxaal and Baden (1997) say that empowerment of women also entails challenging systemic oppression and inequality in the society. Empowerment for women in marginalized communities such as pastoral populations is of is important because women in these communities tend to receive little attention within all development processes. Although works have been carried out on pastoralists in Africa, many stereotyping observers liken a woman's role in the pastoral economy to that of the beast of burden (Creighton and Yieke, 2006). Whereas this is not always true, women in pastoral communities face various socio-economic, political and cultural challenges, which need redress. Community radio plays key roles to this end (AMARC, 2007).

Serian Radio community

Serian radio is a community radio station located about 3km from Maralal town in Samburu district which is about 270km North of Nairobi, the capital city of Kenya. The radio has a signal strength that reaches about 80 square kilometers. The radio targets the largely pastoral rural population living in scattered *manyattas*. The language of communication is basically local Samburu. With the exception of Malaral Town, the community is largely homogeneous because few members of other communities have settled there.

The illiteracy levels among women in this area stand at nearly 80 percent. According to the Kenya Integrated Household Budget Survey (2005/06) the literacy level among women in Samburu County stood at 23.4 percent. The report says that high incidences of parents not taking children to school were observed in Samburu at 67.9 per cent while the gross attendance ratio among girls in the county stands at 2.6. Therefore many women depend on a communication medium that uses the local Samburu language. Apart from Serian FM, no other broadcaster uses the Samburu language in the same geographical area. The other FM stations in the area broadcast in Kiswahili language (Kenya's national language), and whose studios are in Nairobi running or airing content that is generally national and entertainment oriented.

Socio-Economic, Political and Cultural Challenges Facing Women among Pastoral Communities

Tisdell (1997) observes that cultural norms are practiced in such a way that women find it hard to go and look for work or mix with men. This hinders women from gathering information on opportunities. The scholar says that the women are thus cut off from channels of communication and the information they receive is filtered through their husbands or community leaders. In addition, since the welfare of children is highly dependent on the welfare of the mother, the deprivation of females results in deprivation of children. Tisdell (1997) affirms that women face culture-induced marginalization.

A study by Osamba (2001), points out that whereas pastoralism is the best way in which natural resources in the rangelands can be utilized, it has always lacked the support in the highest echelons of government. Consequently, pastoralists are always prone to marginalization and impoverishment with the areas they inhabit which are basically in the

arid and semi-arid regions suffering from want of even the most basic of human needs, information. The scarcity of resources and information in their drought prone environment makes them highly vulnerable to any slight shock, be it social, political or environmental. As buttressed by Hendrickson et al. (1998), development planners in Kenya since the colonial period have never recognized pastoralism as a rational production system. As a result, development interventions in pastoral areas are laced with ignorance about pastoralism and pastoral systems and therefore fail miserably occasioning a huge between the 'high potential' areas and the ASALs. Osamba (2001) and Hendrickson et al (1998) indicate that pastoralists in Kenya have been generally and historically marginalized. This study will focus on the Samburu people, particularly women.

Women in pastoral communities face numerous development challenges. The National Poverty Eradication Strategy in Kenya 1999-2015 indicates that over 2.4 million women in pastoral communities were faced with abject poverty (GOK, 2001b). This leaves pastoral women at rampant economic disadvantage. Exploring the extent of such economic marginalization is a major focus in this current study.

Insecurity, illiteracy and human rights abuses are some of the challenges faced by pastoral communities in Kenya. According to official records (GOK, 2001b), the average literacy rate for pastoral areas is 46 per cent. For women, the figure in some pastoral districts in Kenya is as low as 26 per cent. This is exacerbated by high school dropout rate among female students in these areas. Insecurity also beset women among pastoral communities. This emanates from livestock rustling, which results to loss of lives, internal displacement and human rights abuses. Women among pastoral communities also face suffer acute famine. This results due to drought caused by delicate environmental conditions (Creighton and Yieke, 2006).

Women among pastoral communities face political and economic marginalization. This is often manifested in low participation in political and governance issues at grassroots and national levels. Furthermore, there is low access to economic opportunities among women due to absolute neglect and historical exclusion from the mainstream economy. Pastoralist women lack supportive institutions and structures and where they exist, they are weak and inefficient in addressing their needs (GOK, 2001b).

That community radio plays an important role in the empowerment of women is a fact buttressed by the fact that many rural women have access to radios, than any other mass media says Sibanda (2001) who conducted a study of 3000 poor, rural women in four sub-Saharan countries. In the study, 91.1% of the women indicated that they listened to the radio. Another 67.8% indicated that they, not their husbands, owned radio sets. Such high levels of access to radio point out the importance of radio in addressing women empowerment issues. The trend of employing CR as a tool of empowerment to rural and marginalized populations has been used for numerous generations since the advent of community radio.

Drawing examples from East Timor and Ghana, Duer (2004) points out that community radio stations, whether rural, cooperative or participatory, can facilitate information, voice, and local capacities for public debate on key development concerns. Duer (2004) says "developing informative programs about local issues and providing balanced reporting is one important way for local communities, including poor illiterate communities, to develop informed opinions, begin to form interest groups, and mobilize to address common concerns". This empowers poor and illiterate people thereby accelerating community demand for accountability.

Sullivan (2007) buttresses the role of community radio in mobilizing groups and bringing change to societies. This is evidenced in reporting by and on underserved communities; in-depth coverage of political events including those by small parties; serious discussion of issues neglected by corporate media such as labour movements; low and full power stations in rural communities and urban neighborhoods; and lobbying for a more democratized media generally.

Another study undertaken in rural Liberia took an econometric approach in analyzing the power of community radio as a cost-effective development tool for women. Indeed, the overall and marginal effects of radio are greater in areas of empowerment that received dedicated community radio programming (Cyrus, 2010). The study emphasized on empowerment of women, irrespective of whether they actively or passively participated in programming. It also focused on the nation-wide programming of a local radio in addition to the setting that is basically post-conflict.

Al-Hassan, Andani and Abdul-Malik (2011) carried out a study focusing on the contribution of Simli Radio to the livelihood improvement of the people in the Tolon-Kumbungu and Savelugu-Nanton Districts of the Northern Region of Ghana. They employed a multi-stage sampling technique to select 12 communities for the study. Data was collected on the use of broadcasting as a tool for educational advancement, promotion of the traditional culture, communication and information sharing, entertainment and income promotion. The study established that Simli Radio had managed to improve awareness and knowledge of solutions to community development problems ranging from culture, rural development, education, hygiene and sanitation, agriculture to local governance. This study shed light in the use of community radio in improving awareness and knowledge in rural areas. Knowledge especially of cultural stereotypes hindering development is of key importance within the processes of women empowerment.

Accram (2004) points out that in East Africa, community radio has been found to be any effective way of countering detrimental attitudes and behaviors towards women in areas such as education, literacy, income generation, status and safety in the community. Community radio has played significant roles in increasing cultural and religious diversity in Kenya. It has also fostered the establishment of economic empowerment programmes for women in Tanzania and Uganda.

Challenges Faced By CR in Kenya

According to AMARC (2007), Community radio is faced with numerous challenges. Some of the challenges are unique to certain regions or countries. These could be situations of oppression, military threats, censorship and inadequate legislation and regulation of community radio. As such CR may be faced with challenges in spectrum and frequency allocation, definition in law and lack of support and must constantly deal with unfriendly legal frameworks.

According to BBC (2006), one of the major challenges facing Community Radio stations in Kenya is financing, characterized by the high cost of operations, relatively small advertising markets and high maintenance costs of equipment. In addition, CR is faced with inability to pay journalists well, cutthroat competition in the industry and constant fear of harassment by

the government especially when content is perceived as compromising state security (BBC, 2006).

Fairbairn and Rukaria (2009) in a survey of Kenya undertaken by the Open Society Initiative of East Africa found that community radio in East Africa is faced with numerous challenges. These include "vulnerability to political control and influence; unformed and incompetent governance structures; absence of a sense of their own identity, or niche, as community radio stations – resulting in a tendency to imitate commercial stations; lack of management, business planning and marketing capacity, poor audience research skills; limited programming skills and formats – stations broadcast mostly a mix of call-in programmes, music and news just like the trend in commercial radio; high turnover of personnel – stations cannot afford to pay staff and must use volunteers, who use the stations as stepping stones to other jobs; misconceptions in communities and in Kenyan society more broadly about what community radio stations are, and what they can and should achieve and lastly poor financial controls resulting to lack of financial transparency".

Kamweru (2008) points out that CR in Kenya is faced with lack of an enabling legislative framework; lack of electricity in rural areas and the narrow audience; lack of knowledge of the code of conduct; conflict of interest and emotional involvement in stories. As relates to private vernacular FMs there are cases of corruption; employers being blamed for inadequate salaries and facilities; technological constraints; lack of resources –inadequate storage and retrieval library system; events journalism as opposed to process journalism and analytical stories; inadequate knowledge of subjects handled and; lack of education, training and issues of quality.

On his part Musyoki (2008), drawing from the example of Radio Mang'elete, says that there is a misconception of a community radio. The community may easily mistake it for an income generating facility and give it little support. More often than not, they may see it as facility that is superior for them to own. Many of the community members may want to be associated with the leadership and supervision of the project leading to much political interference and management problems. In addition, every member of the community may want their children and relatives to be employed by the project irrespective of their experience and work skills. Being started by donors, sustainability and poor financial

management may lead to failure as a result of withdrawal of funding. The former paper is in line with the present study since it shall also explore the economic, social and political constraints facing CR in Kenya. It shall go on to explore negative perceptions to CR in Kenya.

Since volunteers run community radios, most of the talented personnel end up being "poached" by commercial radio stations, which offer more stable employment. Furthermore, community radio may be faced with insufficient funding hence hindering the realization of their mandates. Community radio is often subject to criticism and competition from commercial radio. There is often high insecurity of presenters as they live in insecure environments. Lastly, staff and volunteers are often inadequately trained (Musyoki, 2008). The present study, just like the previous work, shall investigate the challenges posed by poor management, inadequate funding, insecurity, competition and criticism from commercial radio stations and high employee turnover.

Research Approach

This paper adopted a qualitative method; the research entailed collecting data through interviewing women, government officials, managers, staff and community committee members of Serian FM on their views on Serian FM and women empowerment. This was guided by the view of comprehending the perceptions of respondents on the subject under study (Summerhill and Taylor, 1992). In essence, the conclusions drawn through this approach were crucial in equipping the researchers with the enabling tool for suggesting feasible ways through which women empowerment could be enhanced among marginalized communities through community radio.

According to AMARC 2007; Lennie & Tacchi, 2011; Rodriguez, 2001 as cited in Bandeli (2011), qualitative studies "are needed to counteract the tendency to measure Community Media initiatives through achieved outcomes and quantitative indicators, and, thus, to appreciate CR for the sole fact that they provide a voice to the voiceless".

Target Population

The research targeted an estimated population of 2,700 village women of ages between 18 and 65 residing in five administrative divisions (Mataso, Kirisia, Lorroki, Wamba and Baragoi) where the signal of Serian FM is received. Furthermore, the study targeted 20 board

members and 8 Serian FM members of staff (1 administration manager, 1 production manager, 1 editor and five presenters), and 3 public administrators (chiefs).

This population was targeted to ensure that all the objectives of the study were addressed. To this end, Serian FM board, managers and staff represented the content generation of the radio in its effort at agenda setting vis-à-vis women empowerment. The women on the other hand gave the recipients' point of view to counterbalance Serian FM management perceptions on how they address women empowerment issues in their agenda setting approach.

Proportionate stratified sampling and simple random sampling within the various strata was used. In stratified sampling, the population is sub-divided into homogenous groups. These could be categories, sizes and various groups. The advantage of this sampling method is that it ensures units from each main group are included. In this case, there is the possibility of it being more reliably representative (Nachmias & Nachmias, 1996).

In the case of this paper, the target population was divided into the following strata: ordinary village women, government officials (local provincial administration), Serian FM board, and managers of Serian FM and members of staff at the station. Within the various strata, simple random sampling was employed to get respondents. The study was limited to only three villages that were purposively sampled in cognizance of logistical nightmares namely the expansive nature of the villages in the region and poor transport network.

Sample Size

A sample of 80 women was drawn from 3 villages in 3 divisions. The villages sampled were Ang'ata Rongai in Lorroki division, Lkurroto in Kirisia division and Marti in Baragoi Division. The three divisions were randomly sampled from the five divisions that receive Serian FM signal. The divisions sampled have the following populations; Lorroki (36,160), Kirisia (67,685) and Baragoi (41,200), KIHBS (2005/06).

On the other hand, the three villages were purposively sampled because of logistical reasons. Transport in Samburu area is unreliable and expensive. In addition, the area is very expansive and sparsely populated. Hence, this research was limited to the three villages. The three villages were purposively chosen since they are more accessible with the little available road transport, however irregular. In addition to these women, 2 committee members, 1 manager

and 2 staff members and 1 government representative was also sampled.

The sampling frame is shown in Table below:

Table 1: Sampling frame

No.	Sample	Population	Sample	Percentage	Sampling procedure
A	Divisions	5	3	60.0	SRS
B	Locations	27	3	11.1	PST
C	Villages (one village per location sampled in B)	20	3	15	PST
D	Women (from the three villages sampled in C)	500	80	16	SRS
E	Community Board Members	20	2	10.0	PSS/SRS
F	Manager of Serian FM	2	1	50.0	PSS/SRS
G	Members of Staff (Editors and presenters)	6	1	16.7	PSS/SRS
H	Government official (Chiefs)	3	1	33.3	PSS/SRS
NB: *PSS - Proportionate Stratified Sampling* *SRS - Simple Random Sampling* *PST- Purposive Sampling Technique*					

(Source: Researchers)

Analysis

The paper geared to investigate the role of community radio in the empowerment of women among pastoralist communities in northern Kenya. It drew a case study of Serian FM. The findings of this research have been organized, analyzed and presented in line with the objectives of the research.

The first step in analyzing the data collected was to establish themes; patterns and relations emerging across the data. This was followed by search for similarities and differences in the

various sets of data for the purposes of obtaining the opinions of the different respondents. This was followed by a summary of what the researcher found as similarities and differences. To this end, a summary from the questionnaires (question-by-question) was undertaken to illustrate key themes in each question. Where possible, quotations that illustrate the themes were inserted. Conclusions were made based on these summaries.

About Serian FM

The Serian 88.9 FM is a Samburu Community Radio that was started in the year 2008 by Reto Women Association; Samburu Chapter. Reto is a Samburu word meaning to assist or help or aid in a particular venture while Serian means peace. Serian is also used as a form of greeting among the Samburu. The radio station is located 3km from Maralal town along Maralal – Loosuk highway next to Maralal water supply on a high ground. Serian 88.9 covers a radius of about 80km squared and beyond depending on the topography of the location.

The radio went on air on 1st July 2009 and the first broadcast was done on 2nd Sept 2009. The aim of the radio is to broadcast to the people living on arid and semi arid areas so as to entertain, inform, and educate them especially on drought early warning system and topical issues affecting the community especially women.

The radio broadcasts to a population of about 100,000. The language of broadcast is generally Samburu. However, some particular programmes and time slots are undertaken in Swahili and English to be able to serve the rest of the communities living in the neighborhood. But even during these times, the Samburu language is still interspersed especially to respond to issues where the audience needs a deeper explanation in the Samburu language to effectively understand or participate in the programme.

One of the main aspects of Serian 88.9 is to promote, educate and inform the listeners especially the young generation on the importance of their culture and improve it to be a source of income and employment. This not only entails eradicating the negative side of culture like female genital mutilation and early marriages and keeping or improving the positive culturally acceptable values through Serian FM as a medium.

Table 2 Serian FM programme schedule

Time	Programme	Content
6 – 6.10am	News	Local news on issues affecting the community and sports news
6.10am – 10am	Nkakenya e Serian (Good Morning Serian)	Interactive show, comic and talk show on cultural issues
10 –10.05am	News Brief	Local news on current affairs, issues affecting the community and sports
10.05 – 11.00am	Music session	Cultural music
11.00am – 1.00pm	Nduaat e Serian (Educative programmes)	Features, documentaries, interactive talk show on selected educative topics
1.00 – 1.10pm	News Bulletin	Local news, a little national current affairs and sports
1.10 – 2.00pm	Music session	All kind of music
2.00 – 4.00pm	Youth programme	Call-ins plus music requests; interactive talk shows on selected topics like drug abuse, youth $relationships, youth $ career choice; drama shows
5.00 – 5.05pm	News Brief	Local news
5.00 – 6.00pm	Music session	Presenter's choice

(From Fairbairn J.and Rukaria D. (2009). *Poised for Growth Community Radio in Kenya. Developing Radio Partners & the Kenya Community Media Network*, page 51).

Demographic Information

The study targeted a sample of 80 women drawn from 3 villages. As a result of heavy rains and inaccessible roads, only 60 women were reached (resulting to a village women participants' response rate of 75%). The age of the women ranged from 18 to 65 years. Most of the women were married (58.3%). Their professions included – unemployed, housewife, business, government worker and farmers. A station manager, 2 committee members, I member of staff and I government representative participated in the study. Information about

the village women was quantified and presented for purposes of showing the diversity of the participants as shown in Figures 4.1 to 4.3.
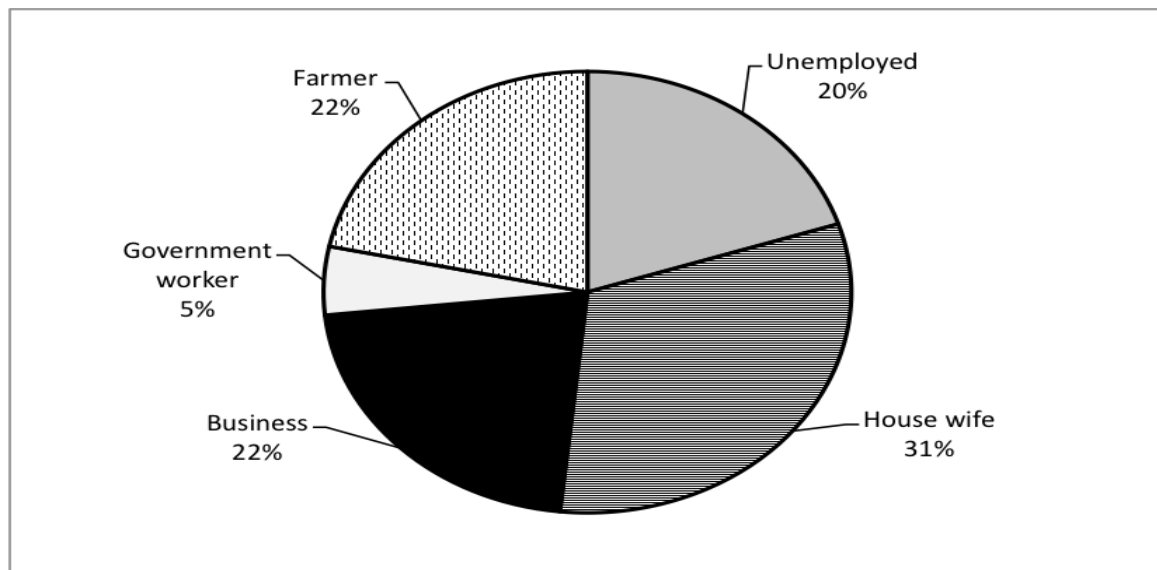
Figure 1: Age of Women Participants
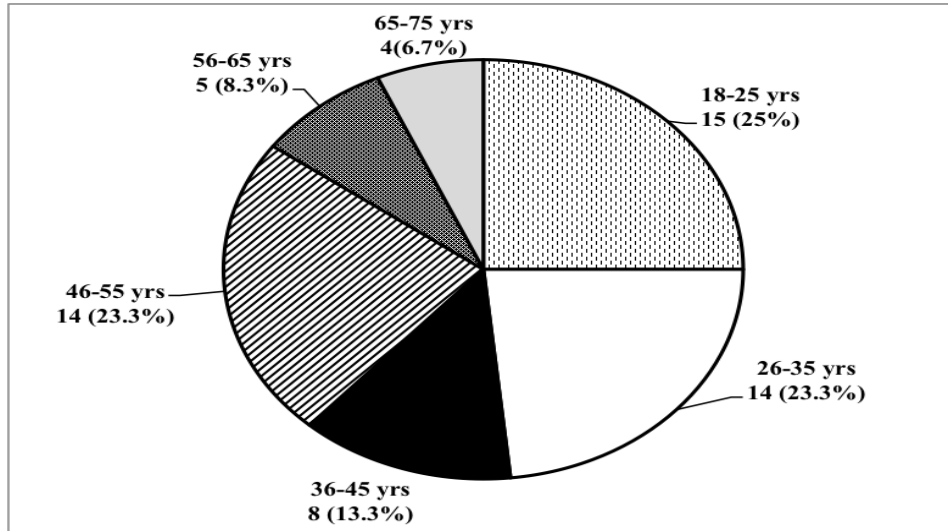
Figure 2: Marital Status of Women Participants
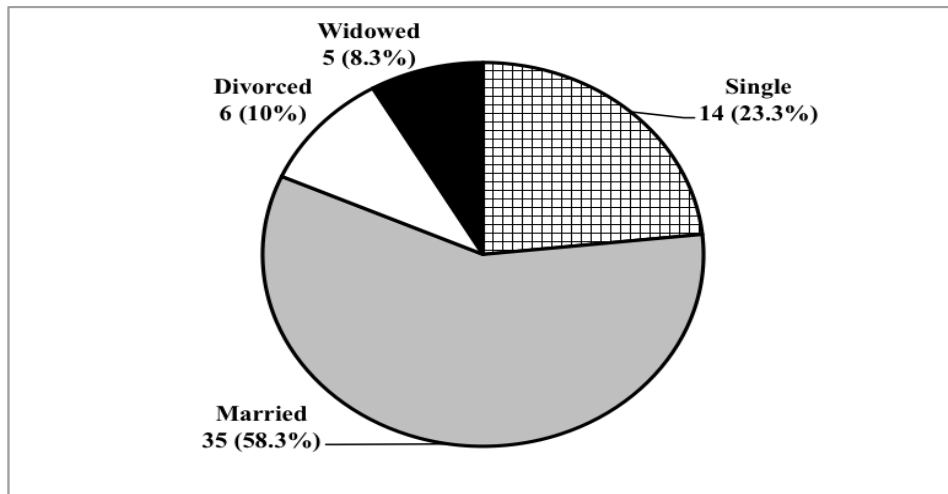
Figure 3: Profession of Women Participants

Categorizing Themes

Within the analysis of data, major themes were established because diverse and rich data was obtained. Careful scrutiny of the data obtained was therefore indispensable.

Some of the respondents wielded abundant knowledge and willingly gave informative responses. All the data obtained was pooled together and sorted as stated in the preceding chapter. Within this process, the researcher put down all regular themes and information emanating from the perceptions from respondents. As the themes were thoroughly scrutinized, the researcher came up with befitting brief description and perceived implications to women empowerment through community radio. Lastly, the researcher came up with a thematic framework for use in examining and referencing data within the process of the analysis.

Although immense volumes of data were obtained, the researchers thought it expedient to start with exploring the objectives of the station, various socio-economic, political and cultural communications needs that Samburu women address through Serian FM, extent to which Samburu women participate in Serian FM programmes and how they feel empowered, challenges faced by Serian FM in addressing various issues facing Samburu women and

among others. These were identified as the first major themes and were presented in Tables 3 to 6.

Tables 3: Relevance of the Objectives of the Radio Station to Women Empowerment

Major Themes	Relevant issues	Actual/perceived relevance to study objectives
Objectives of Serian FM	- To re-structure and streamline the Samburu cultural practices hence keeping what is socially acceptable at the present era; - To have a community that is updated/informed about the current affairs and adheres to the rule of law; - To have a society with upright youth who are educated and drugs free; - To uplift the livelihood of the society and improve their way of life through educative programs and; - To produce an HIV/AIDS free generation.	- Empowerment of women through socially accepted cultural practices; - Women updated with current issues which may empower them in all spheres of life; - Educated youth (including young women) can engage in fostering women empowerment issues; - Educating women through relevant programs leads to their empowerment

Table 4: Women Empowerment Through Serian FM

Major Themes	Relevant issues	Actual/perceived relevance to study objectives
Participation of women in programmes and productions	- Some young women work and participate in the activities of the radio; - Women contribute directly to programmes since programmes are in the local Samburu language and they can call in and contribute	- Empowerment through fulltime and part-time employment - Participation means they can air their views directly through call-in programmes or in productions

	- Doors are open, anyone can walk in and even go on air - Dialoguing among women and other stakeholders in the community	- Have free access to the station and can suggest issues that can be addressed by the radio - Participation means women can take control of programmes on issues affecting them
Women empowerment through the radio station	- Speaking on social issues like GBV; - Businesses started by women - The dangers of FGM understood - Addressing issues of early marriages - Engaging in social and cultural activism - Familiarizing with how the media operates	-Through relevant programmes and productions, the station has addressed issues related to FGM and GBV; -Education programmes on business and IGAs has seen women get into business -The community feared harming women since they could be exposed in broadcasts

Table 5: Communication Needs of Samburu Women

Major Themes	Relevant issues	Actual/perceived relevance to study objectives
Communications needs that Samburu women	- Culture – traditions that affect women both positively and negatively - Women's rights as human rights - Education including right to education, girl-child education and the overall quality of education - The role of women in leadership.	- The radio created opportunities for women's voices to be heard; - Educates the community to respect women; - Addresses equality issues through programmes - Experts participate in

	- Women participation in elections - Livelihood – environmental conservation and use of scarce resources - Women condition information on business (economic) opportunities, health issues among others - Entertainment	programmes to address various women communication issues - Entertainment through folklore and songs

Table 6: Challenges Facing Serian FM In Undertaking Women Empowerment

Major Themes	Relevant issues	Actual/perceived relevance to study objectives
Challenges to women participation in the radio station	- Low level of education among women - Lack of confidence among women - Poverty (inability to access mobile phones or airtime or travel) - Language barrier (when non-locals are involved) - Lack of knowledge on how to participate - Nature of the topic under discussion since some issues are regarded taboo to talk in public - Traditional gender roles where some women have to get consent from their husbands to participate in the discussion. In some homes, a woman needs permission to access the radio set	- Inability to participate in programmes addressing women empowerment issues due to illiteracy - Low participation on issues of importance to women due to the local cultural status of women in the society and poverty
Challenges	- Lack of expert skills to address	- Staff may not have the

facing the station while addressing women issues	women issues - Inability to understand some of the cultural issues facing women such as F.G.M, reproductive health among others due to stigmatization and taboos	requisite skills to address all the pertinent women empowerment issues; - Empowerment may be hindered by the inability to design responsive programmes that address women issues;
Addressing challenges faced while undertaking women empowerment	- Involving other stakeholders - Involving men	-Other stakeholders eg churches, local NGOs and even health workers involved in relevant women empowerment issues may be more informed on such issues -Some of those stakeholders have more rapport with the community as a result of being in the field for longer periods -Involving men can enhance women empowerment activities since they are often responsible for the women's welfare in the Samburu society

Expositions of the Major Themes

This research employed inductive thematic analysis as the analytical instrument. This involved the identification, analysis and reporting of themes/patterns highlighted in the data given by respondents. The researchers attempted to make judgment of the meanings of the responses obtained. Further, relevance, connections between ideas was established. In the backdrop of this, the researchers made efforts to ensure that the research questions were answered. Data was obtained from women drawn from the community, managers, presenters,

board members and government administrators. Each questionnaire and interview was transcribed singly and interpreted carefully and thoughtfully. It is worth noting that, the researcher tried as much as possible to avoid bias and ensure validity and credibility of the analysis.

As shown in Tables 3 to 6, the main themes identified were: Objectives of Serian FM, women empowerment through the radio station, communications needs of Samburu women, challenges to women participation in the radio station, challenges facing the station while addressing women issues; and addressing the challenges facing the radio station in addressing women issues. Some of the interviews from the different categories of respondents were reported to buttress the information presented under each theme.

Empowerment of Women through Participation

Women were also being empowered through being involved in programmes and productions of the radio station. Appropriately, such involvement could yield women empowerment through direct employment (part-time employment) in the activities of the station. In addition, participation means that women can air their views directly through call-in programmes or in productions. In addition, women had access to the station and could suggest issues that could be addressed through the programmes and productions of the radio station. One of the women from the board was of this opinion:

> mmm.. yes, we involved the community right from the word go. They also felt that they were part of the radio because their own children were the presenters. And also the programmes are in their own language and they are also able to contribute. And our doors are open; anyone can walk in and even go on air.

This agrees with a woman who said:

> Yes, during call in sessions, I contribute on issues or topics of the day.

In the same accord another woman said this on the issue of her participation:

> I share my personal life experience and also to teach the communities on the issues on F.G.M live on air.

Yet another woman agreed that participation was enhanced in the radio station through call-in programmes. She had this to say:

> By providing an opportunity for listeners to call in and contribute to the topic of discussion of which I personally called in the studio and contributed several times.

As stated in Table 4.1, nearly all programmes have call-ins that ensure full participation of the audience.

On their part, presenters also corroborated that they enhanced women participation in their programmes through different approaches. Women were engaged in call-in programmes or as guests to participate in interviews on issues related to women. This can be exemplified in the words of one of the station presenters:

> *They call in and empower the rest and advise. At times I research and get one of them to interview in the studio about a certain topic selected.*

The station manager also confirmed this. The Station manager had this to say:

> *The station involves them on the programs that concern the women and children by giving women an opportunity to come to the studio and share their issues, opinions and educate their colleagues live on air and also on the public call in and SMS sessions.*

The government representative (chief) was of the view that women participation enhanced their confidence and made them have control of issues that affected them.

> *…mm…I encourage women to go the station (Serian FM) and talk boldly about issues of concern to them. If they do so, they will have confidence. How else can they feel in control of the issues affecting them if it is not by taking part in the radio and telling others what they feel?*

Empowerment of Women through Programmes/Productions

The study also evidenced that women were directly empowered through the radio station. This was evidenced in the reduction of wife beating (GBV), establishment of business by women, reduction in FGM as well as lower incidences of early marriages. This was achieved through relevant programmes and productions, which educated women as well as the entire community on negative socio-cultural issues that put women at a competitive disadvantage in the community as well as other relevant issues. The station manager, for example points out how women's lives had been positively transformed (which is empowerment by itself) through the programmes of Serian FM. They had found a voice and had testimonies of the changes they had realized through the radio station.

> *That indeed the Samburu women were voiceless before Serian F.M was introduced and now that they have a voice, their lives, their homestead, families and lifestyle is*

not the same again…. Mainly on how the program is changing their livelihood, it's interesting when a caller (woman) calls the station or sends an SMS and shares her personal experience and how after listening to the show finds out that her lifestyle has changed completely. It keeps the station going.

A radio presenter said that empowerment of women could be evidenced:

Gender-based violence has reduced, women start of businesses (have started businesses), they are engaged in merry-go-round (activities for pooling resources together)…

The programmes themselves were seen as tools of direct women empowerment. This was achieved through the education programmes undertaken by the radio. People feared to be involved in gender based violence for fear of being exposed through the radio station. This was a major step towards women empowerment as depicted by the chief:

….eh…mmm…the radio has done a lot for women. The evidence is all over. You know nowadays people fear beating their wives. If one so does, he gets exposed. They can put you in the news and that makes one become ashamed. Who would not fear that?

Response of Serian FM to the Communication Needs of Samburu Women

The station also responded to the communications needs of Samburu women. There were numerous communication needs identified among the Samburu women. To begin with: the culture keeps women from decision making-they needed a voice. In addition, their rights needed to be upheld and someone needed to talk about it. There was also need to push for empowerment through equal access to education as well as business and health education information access. The radio responded to these communication needs by creating opportunities for women's voices to be heard, educating the community to respect women, addressing equality issues through programmes and inviting experts to participate in programmes that addressed various women communication issues. To this end, the station manager had this to say:

Needs a platform to air their voices due to cultural Ok, most of the daily activities in the family are undertaken by women i.e. working from morning till evening, compared to other members of the family, a woman has fewer hours to rest and they are the most undermined culturally by their husbands. Being the most active person in the

> *family, a woman has no right to make any decision in the society/community of the*
> *Samburu culture.*

The radio presenter interviewed stressed on the need for women to get a platform to air their views, a right culturally deprived from them.

> *Most family daily chores are always done by them from morning to evening, she has*
> *few hours of rest compared to anyone in the family but culturally they are undermined*
> *by their husbands that a woman cannot suggest or attend any forum which actually*
> *contradicts her efforts.*

The women, on their part felt that they had lagged behind in terms of communication and information on what was going on in the world. Serian FM had bridged this communication gap. One of the women interviewed had this to say:

> *I look for information that will bring a change to me, to my family and the community*
> *as well. Before Serian came, we thought we were left behind since we did not know*
> *what is happening around the world but ever since the introduction of Serian F.M, at*
> *least now we know what is going on. So am looking forward for serian to diserminate*
> *the instant information that will help us going.*

Another woman was of a different opinion. There had been need for a platform to handle sensitive issues such as FGM and HIV/AIDS. Stigma and cultural taboos had made communication about these issues hard; a situation that had been addressed by the radio station.

> *At least from Serian FM, I learnt more about H.I.V/AIDS and how to manage the*
> *stigma. I also learnt more on health issues like breastfeeding, FGM and many other*
> *interesting topics like issues on relationships.*

Challenges Hindering Women Participation in the Radio Station

Several challenges that inhibited women participation in the radio station were identified. These included: low level of education among women, lack of confidence among women and poverty. Poverty could hinder women from purchasing radio receivers, mobile phones and/or airtime (for use during call-in programmes) and inability to visit the radio station. Illiteracy also hinders active participation because of lack of confidence and knowledge on issues under discussion. Furthermore, the cultural status of women in the Samburu society results in low participation due to low self-esteem. This can be exemplified in the words of the station manager:

> *The difference in the level of education leads to conflict on air. This is when the illiterate women contribute their opinions, the literate ones feel that they are not correct and try to create a difference.*

> *Most of them shy off the radio, either when they are contributing through call in sessions or when they are being interviewed.*

The radio presenter was of contrary opinion and felt that women did not face any challenges within the process of participating in the radio station. The presenter opined that:

> *No challenges since they have already known they are empowered and they like it.*

On their part, women affirmed that factors such as illiteracy and poverty were some of the key issues inhibiting their active participation in the radio station. This is exemplified in the words of one participant who said:

> *Airtime is the main challenge I normally face, as well as illiteracy ie sometime I find it difficult to understand well on some critical issues. Challenges are there.*

Other women pointed language as a major challenge. This was especially so when an expert who could only communicate in Kiswahili was invited as a guest. Some words, common in English and used in most formal settings, may not have their equivalent in the local dialect hence giving the presenter (who acts as interpreter) and the guest difficult time to handle the production. All in all, poverty posed the greatest challenges to participation as stated again by one of the women:

> *The issue of airtime, power and poverty level is also another big challenge.*

Failure to understand some of the ways of participating in the programmes and productions of the radio station was another challenge to women participation. The radio station needed to put in place ways of educating the community on the procedure of participation. To this end, one of the women said:

> *It was a challenge for me to speak on the radio for the first time since I have never been in a radio studio. I was tense but I managed. As a Samburu woman from the medical field, I handled issues of healthcare on the production. Listeners also stressed me on the questions they were asking since there are still some sensitive issues you cannot just air them in this area where people are not yet so much exposed.*

In addition, the chief pointed out that women often feared speaking in public media due to cultural reasons. For many years, women had taken second place to men. They saw

themselves as 'children' who should not speak when 'fathers''-their husbands- were speaking. A woman airing her views was seen as being proud:

> *A woman may fear speaking through the radio station. In popular parlance, a woman who is bold enough to speak through the radio station is seeing as a "kimbelembele" woman (Swahili for proud and show-off). Furthermore, the society sees women as children who should not speak when fathers are speaking. I think this has kept many women from participating in the radio station. A lot has to be done to change this.*

Challenges Facing Serian FM in Undertaking Women Empowerment Programmes

There were various challenges hindering effective women empowerment by Serian FM. Some of these included: lack of expert skills to address women issues; inability to understand some of the cultural issues facing women such as F.G.M and reproductive health among others due to stigmatization and taboos. Lack of the requisite skills among staff of the radio station meant that they were unable to design responsive programmes that address all pertinent issues facing women. This is buttressed by the words of the manager who said that:

> *…Communication skills between the staff who are to address the issue and the women who are supposed to give their stories. At times it's difficult to understand some of the issues affecting the woman since as per the culture of the Samburu most of the issues like F.G.M, pregnancies, S.T.I etc. are still considered in some sections as obscene to discuss them therefore making it difficult to be addressed.*

The manager also added that there were other challenges facing the station in general and that could hinder it from realizing its mandate; including women empowerment. These ranged from low staff capacity and financing challenges. To this end, the manager said:

> *As community radio, there are a lot of challenges the station is facing, from management (being managed by the community) to logistics and also the staff capacity building since most of them are not trained journalist.*

Another major challenge, as voiced by a radio presenter, was dealing with inertia to change in the community. Educating the audience on was not a guarantee to immediate change in negative behavior. For example, women still went ahead and participated in FGM irrespective of having being informed of the danger. The presenter said:

> *Before they came and understand the dangers of FGM, most of them have undergone the practice and now they have understood the dangers*

Addressing the Challenges Facing the Radio Station while Undertaking Women Empowerment

The participants opined that the most viable ways of addressing the challenges facing women while addressing women empowerment issues was: involving other stakeholders such as churches, local NGOs and even health workers. It was also expedient to involve men. This was particularly important since some of those stakeholders had more rapport with the community as a result of being in the field for longer periods. On their part, men could enhance women empowerment activities since they were often responsible for women's welfare in the society. To this end, the manager of the station said:

> *By involving the concerned authorities, like the churches, local NGOs and even health workers who are more informed on the issues.*

On men, the manager said:

> *The possibility of making men to understand and realize that behind every man's success a woman is behind it and Samburu women are not exceptional and therefore they should never be undermined in anyway.*

Conclusion

The study established various communication needs of women. One of the major needs was a forum for airing women issues in a highly patriarchal society. Women needed a way of having their needs upheld and someone to talk about such rights. The radio station played a key role in doing so. A channel for increased information access was highly needed by women. Women required a platform for accessing information on business, health, family and other issues of importance.

In effect, Serian FM responded to these communication needs by creating opportunities for women's voices to be heard, Educating the community to respect women, addressing equality issues through programmes and inviting experts to participate in programmes that addressed various women communication issues. Information on current affairs was also highly needed by women. In highly marginalized area, women often found themselves cut off from the rest of the world. As a result of cultural norms and taboo, sensitive issues such as FGM, GBV and HIV were often hard to address. There was need to have a platform for cutting through this cultural fabric. The radio went a long way to respond to this need.

There was evidence of women empowerment through their involvement in the programmes and productions of the radio station. Empowerment was realized both directly and indirectly. To begin with, some of the women (girls) got part-time employment as volunteers in the activities of the station. This was in itself a form of empowerment since it created opportunities for women to earn some income.

The participation of women in the radio station was in various ways. The most important being that the station's 20-member board is composed of 10 women. The women therefore participate directly in the policy formulation at the station. This is because Reto Women Group started the station as an avenue for advocacy.

Women are also empowered through airing of their views directly through call-in programmes or in productions. The station was open for women to walk in and suggest areas that they thought the radio needed to focus on. Women with expertise on various issues facing women were also invited to the radio station as guests during programmes that dealt with women issues. Participation of women in programmes improved their confidence and made them have control over issues that affected them.

Even as the radio encouraged women participation, several challenges inhibited such participation. The major challenge was the level of education among women (illiteracy), lack of confidence among women and poverty. Poverty hindered women from purchasing radio receivers, mobile phones and/or airtime (for use during call-in programmes) and inability to visit the radio station.

Illiteracy could hinder active participation. Furthermore, the poor cultural status of women in the Samburu society could result to low participation due to low self-esteem. Language was a major factor that had endeared women to participate fully and identify Serian FM as their own mouthpiece. Serian FM is the only Samburu speaking radio and the level of ownership among the community members is very high.

Cultural norms are major challenges to women empowerment because they inhibited the participation of women. In the Samburu culture, the woman is still considered second class. However, through the programmes run on Serian FM, they are able to articulate and sieve

which cultures are progressive and therefore lead towards women and therefore societal empowerment. This kept many women from coming out to actively participate in the radio station. However, when women surpassed these challenges and participated, various benefits were realized.

Radio Serian is positively affecting lives of women in Samburu. Since its debut, it has changed the way women issues are handled in Samburu. In spite of the challenges facing the radio station and as well as women in handling women empowerment issues, the radio station has actually played a significant role in empowering women.

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