

Role Of Dholuo FM Radio Programmes In Flood Warning In West Nyakach Division, Kenya

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Abstract: Flooding is an uncertain phenomenon thus advance warning, evacuation and flood control are effective and sustainable methods of reducing the devastation caused by floods. Raising awareness and preparing the population in general to respond to natural disaster such as floods, should be a crucial task for the mass media. A report by Kenya Red Cross (2012) indicated that 5000 people suffer the effects of floods every year in Nyakach District in Kenya, and the damage is estimated at 49 million. The recurrence of floods seems to be an indicator of lack of knowledge on the flood risk management in West Nyakach. This study focused on the vernacular radio programmes offered by two Dholuo Radio stations; Radio Ramogi & Radio Lake Victoria, these stations offer a forum for the listeners to call radio station directly and discuss issues related to risk management. The study was guided by the Uses and Gratification Theory (Blumler and Katz 1974). 150 homesteads, two radio programmes managers and one area chief constituted the sample for the study. Data were collected using questionnaires and oral interview. The findings revealed that, majority of residents listened to radio broadcast in Dholuo and received flood warning over the radio, they also depend on radio for flood warnings which seemed timely. Though most of the residents did not respond positively to early flood warning.

Keywords: Media Effects, Flood Risk, Mitigation

I. INTRODUCTION

Raising awareness and preparing the population in general to respond to natural disaster such as floods, should be a crucial task for the mass media (Sood 1987). The media has the obligation to provide members of the public with information and knowledge on early warning. Floods are a perennial problem in West Nyakach Division which results in massive destruction of both humans and the environment. A report by Kenya Red Cross (2012) indicated that 5000 people suffer the effects of floods every year in Nyakach District and the damage is estimated at 49 million, while expenditure on relief and rehabilitation is Kshs.37 million, this recurrence of floods and the resultant massive destruction within West

Nyakach Division seem to be indicators of lack of knowledge on flood risk management. In addition, the presumed absence of mitigation measures may show that the problem is either ignored or not properly handled. Despite dissemination of information based on floods by Dholuo FM Radio stations, the havoc of floods seems uncontrolled. It would then be worthwhile to discern disconnect between the flood menace and the Dholuo FM station programmes on the same issue. Flood risk management has been focused primarily on advanced warning systems, better surveillance techniques and stronger infrastructure, the use of institutions such as churches and indigenous knowledge has been largely researched on while little research has been conducted on the role of vernacular radio programmes in flood risk management.

Media is usually the only credible information source for the public during a disaster event (Sood 1987), the mass media, especially radio, have gradually become part of our daily lives and sources of information, education and entertainment (Lasswell 1948 as cited in Folarin 2005), West Nyakach being a rural area depend on radio for education, entertainment and information. This is because of its affordability and it does not need literacy for its operation compared to other media. Radio is the most popular mass medium in Kenya especially in most rural areas, with radio stations broadcasting in different languages (Odhiambo, 2002).

This study focuses on the vernacular radio programmes offered by two Dholuo Radio stations that is Radio Ramogi & Radio Lake Victoria, these stations offer a forum for the listeners to call directly and discuss issues related to risk management, these forums should help the listeners as they air their problems, and experience as possible solutions are provided by fellow listeners. Radio also has the power of emancipation because it is a technically simple medium to master and is less expensive than other media. It also provides an opportunity for people to interpret the world on their own (Hendy, 2000; Hochheimer, 1993). Media are the substitute for personal contact and sources of primary group affiliation (Cerulo *et al.*, 1992). However, as PerezLugo (2004) argued, only a limited number of studies addressed this function of the media in natural disasters.

Timely floods warning should aim at providing improved floods forecasting and warning services, in particular it should aim at empowering vulnerable people, at grass-roots level, to cope more effectively with floods disasters. The purpose of early floods warning ought to provide information and warnings so that measures can be taken to protect lives and reduce suffering and economic losses caused by adverse conditions. Floods risk awareness is the cornerstone of non-structural floods risk management. In the event of floods, the lack of awareness of risk can result in a failure to heed warnings to evacuate, thereby endangering lives. Many studies detail the low level of floods awareness exhibited by occupants of flood plains and other floods-prone areas (Waterstone, 1978; Siegrist & Gutscher 2006; Ibrek *et al.* 2005; Burby 2001; Lave and Lave 1991). Awareness may be high in areas where flooding occurs regularly, but is often deficient in locations subject to low frequency but high impact events. However, in the present study, the researcher assesses the impact of floods related knowledge of the residents of West Nyakach Division.

DHOLUO AS A LANGUAGE

Dholuo is spoken by the Luo people on the eastern shores of Lake Victoria in both Kenya and Tanzania with about 3.5 million native speakers and is classified as a Western Nilotic Language. Kenya has two official languages, English and Kiswahili, and over forty deferent local languages associated with diverse ethnic groups. Dholuo is closely related to Acholi and Lango, spoken in Uganda. Dholuo has two dialects, namely the Trans-Yala dialect spoken in Ugenya, Alego, Yimbo and parts of Gem; and the South Nyanza dialect spoken in South Nyanza, Siaya and Kisumu. Although these

dialects are mutually intelligible, they are distinct enough to enable one to tell where the particular speaker comes from, or at least to which group one socially belongs to, merely by his/her accent (Okombo 1982) Socially there exists no standard dialect.

II. METHODOLOGY

- ✓ *Participants* 153 homesteads, one area chief and two Dholuo radio stations programme Managers took part in the study.
- ✓ *Data Collection* in this study, data were collected through a written questionnaire and interview guides. The study targeted 153 respondents; only 133 respondents were able to respond to the instruments giving a response rate of 86.93%. According to Mugenda and Mugenda (2003), a response rate of 50% is adequate for analysis and reporting, while a response rate of 60% is good and that of 70% and above is very good. The response rate of 86.93% achieved in this study was indeed sufficient for analysis and reporting.
- ✓ *Analysis:* Responses to the questions from questionnaires were coded in SPSS according to the theme derived from the research objective and analyzed. The responses to the interviews were organized into themes and analyzed.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

These were the main findings of the paper:

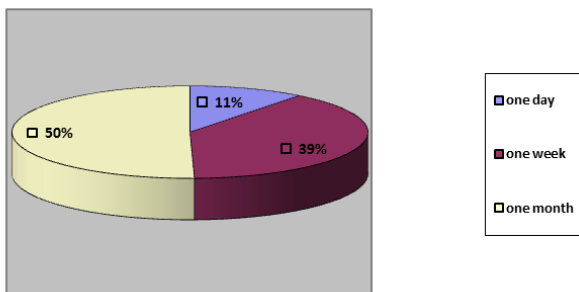
- ✓ Majority of the residents listened to radio broadcast in Dholuo and they have received flood warning over the radio. It can be argued that the majority listens to radio broadcast in Dholuo and this might have contributed to the high level of flood risk management awareness among the residents.
- Table 3.1 presents data on where the respondents got flood warning messages. 37.6% got information from opinion leaders while 85.7% of the respondents got from the radio. 46.6% from government representatives and 27.8% of respondents from their own knowledge thus it is evident that a majority of the respondents depend on radio for flood warning
- ✓ Majority of the residents received warning messages one month to floods over Dholuo radio programmes which were timely.
 - ✓ The study sought to establish how long before the floods the respondents received warning messages over dholuo radio programmes. This information could help in rating the timeliness of such messages to the respondents.

Figure 3.1 shows that, out of 133 respondents, 50.4% received warning messages one month before floods while 39.1% received one week before floods. 10.5% received warning messages a day to floods. This shows that a majority of the respondents (50.4%) received warning messages one month to floods over Dholuo radio programmes which are timely. During interview schedules, radio programmes managers revealed that they worked closely with the Disaster Committee from West Nyakach Division who are members of

the division to draw residents' attention to floods one month before floods. They also used News and Features to reach the people.

Figure 3.2 shows the respondents feeling on the sufficiency of flood warning messages disseminated through Dholuo radio programmes. 48.9% of respondents strongly agreed that flood warning messages were sufficient. 32.3 % agreed that warning messages were sufficient. In contrast, 17.3 % disagreed while 1.5% of the respondents strongly disagreed that warning messages were sufficient. The Area Chief interviewed on what he thought about flood warning messages said that, radio disseminated flood warning messages early enough which he thought to be sufficient and timely enough.

Table 3.2 shows respondents response to flood warning messages. A total of 69.0% did not respond positively towards early flood warning messages while 31% responded positively. Those who did not respond gave the following reasons: some felt that flooding may not occur, some had inadequate resources and they felt that moving with household goods was cumbersome while some felt that moving to new home was very expensive. 31% responded by: digging water check dams, moving animals and properties to safer grounds, for this reason, it can be argued that the destructive nature of floods in West Nyakach could be because of inappropriate response of respondents to flood warning due to their needs.



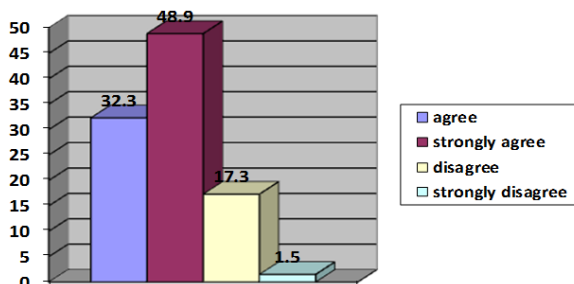
Source: Field data 2013

Figure 3.1: Presentation of Timeliness of Flood Warning Messages

Responses	Opinion leaders		Radio		Government representatives		Own knowledge	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Yes	50	37.6	144	85.7	62	46.6	37	27.8
No	83	62.4	19	14.3	71	53.4	96	72.2
Total	133	100	133	100	133	100	133	100

Source: Field data 2013

Table 3.1: Presentation Of Source Of Flood Warning Messages



Source: Field data 2013

Figure 3.2: Presentation of Respondents' thoughts on Role of Radio in disseminating Sufficient Flood Warning Messages

	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	41	69
No	92	31
Total	133	100

Source: Field data 2013

Table 3.2: Respondents Response to flood warning Messages

IV. CONCLUSION

The following were the conclusions for the study aimed at evaluating the role of Dholuo FM radio programmes in flood warning in West Nyakach Division.

- ✓ On the role of Dholuo FM Radio programmes in conveying warning messages, it was concluded that the programmes have helped in disseminating timely and adequate messages.
- ✓ The data gathered from respondents who participated in the research revealed that people were well informed on dangers of floods through Dholuo FM Radio programmes.
- ✓ The data gathered from respondents in the research revealed that a majority of the respondents received information on evacuation through Dholuo radio programmes they listened to.

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