The Role of Community Radios in the Development of Slum Areas
The Case of Pamoja FM in Kibera Slums, Nairobi, Kenya

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Abstract:- This study sought to examine the role of community radio in promoting the development agenda of slum areas with a specific focus on Pamoja FM that serves Kibera slums in Nairobi. This case study utilised a descriptive design using qualitative approaches. The study utilised interviews, observations, and review of documents as the strategies of collecting data. Data was collected from a census sample of five newsroom staff and thirty regular listeners of Pamoja FM together with key informants who were interviewed and also participated in focus group discussions to provide information on the role of Pamoja FM in promoting the development agenda of their communities. Thematic analysis was used to analyse the data based on study objectives and fieldwork. Data was presented in narrative form and direct quotations. The role of community radio in the provision of information and knowledge for development in slum areas were found to include fostering of peace building, promoting security, overcoming language barrier challenges in communication, encouraging community participation and mobilisation in development matters, acting as a government watchdog, empowering communities economically, and providing communities with a form of communication that they can closely identify with. The study concluded that community radio is a crucial part of the communication process that aids in social change because of its potential to facilitate participation and inclusion in development agenda.

Keywords:- *Community Radio; Development; Slums; Slum Areas.*

I. INTRODUCTION

According to the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) [1], close to 900 million people in the world, particularly those living in developing nations do not have adequate access to information, knowledge, and communication for development. FAO posits that the situation is worse in slum areas where more isolation and lack of access to knowledge for development is experienced. This has been cited as one major contributor to the low development rates witnessed among slum communities in developing nations such as Kenya. Additionally, this situation has mostly been attributed to the geographical location and socio-cultural structure of slum areas [2]. Kibera is among the most marginalised urban slums in Nairobi Kenya when it comes to development. Many attempts have been made to bridge this development gap in the area.

Community radio stations have been on the forefront in providing information, knowledge, and communication that is necessary for development in slum areas [3]. One such station is Pamoja FM in Kibera. For that reason, it is important to find out the place of community radio in the development of slum communities in Kenya. This can be achieved by focusing on what has been done so far by community radios in stimulating development in slum areas in Kenya and highlighting the imminent prospects of community radio as an instrument for communicating development agendas in slum areas such as Kibera.

Marginalised communities are groups or communities within the larger society that have been sidelined in terms of social amenities and development. Slum areas are usually exposed to human distress and social injustices. The concept of marginalisation has been interchangeably used with that of social exclusion to mean the same thing. Kenya's development agenda can be fast tracked by reaching out to these slum areas [4].

II. PROBLEM STATEMENT

Provisions such as good roads, reliable electricity, clean water supply, quality healthcare, proper security, and adequate educational facilities are usually available in developed areas but are often not readily accessible or available to the slum populations. Consequently, slum communities have to a great extent been relegated to the periphery of the regular political and socio-economic development conversations. Their voices remain unheard and their core political and socio-economic concerns largely excluded from the mainstream resource planning and allocation. The magnitude of this exclusion is quite significant in Kenya where a significant number of persons live in the slum zones of the country [5].

The media can be a unique tool in promoting the development agenda of any society because of its ability to highlight daily happenings and provide direction for future development goals. Driven by their profit-making agendas, commercial radio stations may neglect to address the unique localised problems faced by members of certain communities, especially slum ones. This gives community radio the

opportunity to step in and respond to the needs of the members of such communities that it serves, thereby contributing to development and positive social change within the community [6].

III. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Community Radio in Kenya

Community radio can be an effective and interactive platform through which slum communities can be heard and informed. Community radio should not be confused with vernacular radio. There have been numerous arguments about the purpose of vernacular stations in Kenya ever since the country experienced the post poll skirmishes of 2007. Many people interviewed by the Truth Justice and Reconciliation Commission (TJRC) accused vernacular stations of fuelling the violence. These vernacular stations were also accused of having the potential of spreading divisive messages and politics [7].

The media has slowly evolved to become a very influential means of determining people's behaviours. Reference [8] argues that depending on the agenda that the media is out to set, the voices of the people can either be neglected and undermined, or promoted and supported. This means that the media has a noteworthy influence on the lives of people. Reference [8] further posits that controlled media has dominated the world for a long time now, thus causing slum communities to inadequately partake in decision making activities on matters that touch on them directly. Their opinions, ideas, and interests have for a long time not been considered in making decisions about development [8].

In Africa, Kenya is said to have enjoyed the privilege of being the first country to have a community radio station in 1982, which was known as Homabay Community Radio [9]. Despite this, the pace at which Kenya has experienced growth in the community radio sector has been very slow and wanting. On his part, reference [10] notes that this situation can been blamed on previous regimes which feared promoting the development of community media because they thought that it would lead to ethnic tensions. Some well-known community radios in Kenya include Pamoja Radio in Kibera, Koch FM in Korogocho, Mathare FM in Mathare Valley, Radio Maendeleo in Rarieda, and Mang'elete in Makueni among others [10].

B. Development Agenda in Kenya

Ideally, as enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) of 1947, all humans are entitled to rudimentary human rights such as the right to security, water, public service, information, education, rest, leisure, work, social security, and healthcare among many others. According to the UDHR, granting these basic human rights to all human beings regardless of their differences is the foundation of justice, freedom, development, and peace in the universe. This declaration must be respected by all individuals and nations as a common standard for the achievement of human rights and development [11]. The UDHR set the pace for all other development agendas such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), Kenya's Vision 2030, and the most recent big four agenda

launched by the Kenya government in 2018 that focuses on manufacturing, food security, universal healthcare and affordable housing.

Kenya's pursuit to join the league of developed nations is evident through the numerous concerted efforts being put in by various stakeholders. A good instance is Kenya's Vision 2030, which is spearheaded by the Kenyan government, is aimed at giving Kenya a lasting development blue-print to produce a universally viable and flourishing nation with a great standard of life by 2030, that aims to convert Kenya into a new industrializing, middle-income nation giving a good quality life to all its inhabitants by 2030 in a hygienic and safe environment [12]. In 2018, the Kenyan government launched its big four agenda that aims to improve manufacturing, food security, universal healthcare and affordable housing.

Also, Kenya knows that the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) provide a good prospect to cater for human wellbeing in the country. The implementation of the MDGs and Millennium Declaration by the United Nations Assembly in September 2000 was a commendable initiative by the universal community to quicken human development, eliminate poverty, and simplify the steady, but more effective incorporation of the developing world, especially Africa, into the universal economy. The re-affirmation of the MDGs in successive worldwide symposia was an added sign of the commitment of the international community to deal with inequality and poverty, and to finish the marginalization and segregation of the disadvantaged and poor. Kenya has been part of this process since inception. So far, Kenya has made some notable progress towards the realization of the MDGs. This can be seen through initiatives such as the Free Primary Education (FPE) and low cost maternal health care among others.

In Kenya, the problems of achieving rapid and sustainable socio-economic development, eradicating poverty, and integrating the country into the world economy are increasingly being treated seriously as evidenced by some of the latest significant development measures and initiatives such as Vision 2030 and Kenya's efforts towards achieving the MDGs [12]. Many countries are on the forefront in working towards the realization of the SDGs. Even though most of these goals are interrelated, each has its own target to accomplish. However, they all seek to achieve growth in financial and social development issues. Community radio can play a vital role towards the realization of these development agendas because they can be used as mouthpieces to call to action efforts to end poverty, protect the earth and ensure that everyone enjoys prosperity and peace.

Through community radio, civic education to empower the community on development matters can be easily accomplished because of the language used. Community members are more likely to better understand messages conveyed to them through their local language and by members of their own community that they can relate with. Community radio encourages community participation in decision making hence contributing to development of society, and overall, towards the realization of the SDGs. They can contribute towards the development agenda by mobilizing trained

broadcasters to engage different sections of the community in social dialogue and to come forward with their developmental needs. They also have the potential to raise awareness and knowledge among the rural or slum communities on their basic rights thereby acting as a bridge between the local authorities and community members.

IV. METHODOLOGY

This case study adopted a descriptive research design. A qualitative approach was followed. The study was conducted in Kibera, Nairobi County, Kenya.

A. Sampling

This study used the census sampling method where all 5 media staff of Pamoja FM and 30 members of the listeners' clubs together with interns were studied. The sampling frame for the respondents in the focus group discussions consisted of regular listeners of Pamoja FM.

This was provided by the radio station, which has a data base of its regular listeners generated from numerous sources including listener clubs associated with the radio station as well as membership of common interest groups which have grown out of the listener clubs. These community listeners' club comprised of a group of people who listen to radio programmes actively and systematically with a view to discussing the content and above all putting into practice the lessons learned.

The respondents who participated in the focus group discussions were randomly picked from three clusters of older men, women and youth (18 - 35 years). For key informant interviews, a list of potential respondents was drawn beforehand comprising of the media staff and those listed were interviewed using questionnaires.

B. Data Collection Methods and Tools

Data was collected from multiple sources because a good case study seldom relies on a single source of data. Primary data was collected through interviews of key informants, select listeners, local opinion leaders, as well as focus group discussions. Five (5) questionnaires were also given to the 5 media staff to obtain information about the history of Pamoja FM. For these reasons, secondary sources in form of documents and findings of previous similar studies as well as information that was relevant to the subject and location of the study.

The instruments used to collect data in this study were questionnaires, focus group discussion guides and key informant interview guides.

C. Data Analysis

The qualitative analytical process was used to analyse the data that was collected. Data was categorised and compared in preparation for analysis and interpretation. Thematic analysis was employed because it is the most appropriate method of identifying, analysing and reporting patterns and themes within qualitative data. Analysis was geared towards identifying patterns and differences as well as relationships between and among various sets of information. This explained the

contribution or otherwise of Pamoja FM to the development of its listening audience/community. The analysis adopted the explanation building approach that examines the dependent variables and assigns causal attributes with a view to disapproving any plausible rival explanations. This procedure was preferred because it is quite appropriate to explanatory case studies, which approach this study adopted. Through explanation building, this study sought to identify a supposed set of causal links between the social, economic, cultural and political developments in Kibera and the operations of Pamoja FM.

V. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The study sort to establish whether community radio plays a role in the development of the community it serves. The study found out that a linear relationship exists between community radio and development. The respondents were asked to state whether Pamoja FM is a source of development information in their community.

This research was able to establish that Pamoja FM has to a great extent played a critical role in providing information and knowledge for development to the people of Kibera as outlined below.

A. Peace Building and Security

It is nearly impossible to have development without peace and security since peace and development are two sides of the same coin (Barry, 2004). Lack of peace hinders development and destroys the little form of development that existed, if any. Pamoja FM has played an important role in building peace amongst the diverse communities that live in Kibera with the aim of promoting development. It is important to note that the 2007/2008 post-election violence (PEV) that rocked Kenya greatly destabilised the peace in the area as witnessed world over. Kibera was one of the most affected areas, with many cases of loss of lives and massive destruction of property, houses and business premises. Pamoja FM played a critical role in restoring peace among members of the community who were engaged in constant conflict at that time. For instance, Pamoja FM partnered with Kibera Women for Peace and Fairness to help restore peace among the residents of Kibera. Kibera Women for Peace and Fairness is a self-help group that was founded by Jane Onyango in 2008 at the height of the post-election violence, especially against women and children. The group would hold peaceful demonstrations and protest the killings and destruction of property that were being witnessed at that time in Kibera with the aim of sensitising the community against violence. The women would also share their true-life stories about the violence netted against them and provide psychosocial support to those who were adversely affected by the violence.

It is evident that the PEV had worsened the economic situation in Kibera since many hardworking citizens lost their lives and property and businesses that contributed to boosting development in the area were also destroyed. Upon the realisation by Pamoja FM that it shared the same development agenda with the self-help group, the station decided to offer the group a media platform so that it could reach a wider audience

and mobilise more members with the sole aim of spreading the peace for development message. The group still exists to date and constantly engages Pamoja FM in reaching the community to spread peace for development. In this case, Pamoja FM has been instrumental in providing knowledge and information to the residents of Kibera about development by providing a platform through which a development-oriented self-help group can reach out to the residents of Kibera and advise them about the importance of maintaining peace if they are to achieve any form of development in the slum. This just moves to show how instrumental community radio is in keeping it listeners in touch with their development agenda.

According to a policy brief released by the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) in 2008 right after the PEV, community radios played a crucial role in preventing and minimising the tension that instigated the violence. The report stated:

"Pamoja FM, located in Kibera slum, one of the main centers of the post-election unrest in Nairobi-has played an especially courageous role. It has, despite its position, insisted on providing a voice for different communities and worked to calm conflict. Young people make up its main audience and it has directed its efforts at trying to stop fighting between groups of youths."

B. Overcoming Language Barriers

It is expected of community radios to air their broadcasts in a language that is easily understood by the greater part of the population within their reach for them to be effective tools of aiding development [13]. This is especially true if a great majority of the members of a particular community are illiterate or semi-illiterate when it comes to secondary languages. Most contemporary radio stations in Kenya today air their broadcasts mostly in English, and some in Swahili [14]. This study established that Pamoja FM airs most of its broadcasts in sheng' and Swahili, languages that are easily understand by most of the slum dwellers in Kibera. According to the station's management, the deliberate decision to use at least 90% of these two languages in its broadcasts was reached at because most of the station's target audiences are either illiterate or semi-illiterate.

For any population that is not highly educated, a language it understands well is quite critical in communication for development. In this regard, most listeners who were interviewed during this study highly regard Pamoja FM and listen to it because it uses a language that is easily understood when engaging them. During the focus group discussion with the listeners' club, it was revealed that many listeners need no translation or interpretation of the messages broadcasted by Pamoja FM since the broadcasts are in a language they can easily understand. For this reason, they consider the radio station an important tool in communicating educational and developmental information.

Pamoja FM, through its listeners' clubs, realised that many residents of Kibera are quite green when it comes to issues dealing with their own development. The management had recently undertaken a survey to find out if the residents are aware of the global and local development plans that their government should be working towards. These plans include the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Kenya's Vision 2030, and the most recent Agenda 4 launched by the current government as part of national accord. Asked whether they were aware of the existence of these development goals, some respondents revealed that they had heard about some of these agendas but had no idea what they entailed. Those that were aware of the existence of these goals and also knew what they entailed said that they owed their awareness to Pamoja FM, which tried to educate them on such matters.

C. Providing the Community with a Communication Platform it can Easily Identify with

The greatest difference between Pamoja FM and other radio stations broadcasting in Kibera is that most of the others are purely commercial in nature. Most of the other radio stations broadcasting in Kibera are driven by profit motives whereas Pamoja FM is solely driven by protecting the welfare of the community it serves. Secondly, most radio stations that Kibera residents can listen to are located in other areas, mostly in town or other leafy suburbs. This is in contrast to Pamoja FM, which is located at the heart of Kibera slums where its target audiences reside. In the words of reference [15], the location of a community radio station plays a crucial role towards how appealing or otherwise it is in terms of information sharing and access to the members of the community it serves. A community radio station strategically located near the audience it serves is highly likely to enjoy distinctive closeness with the audience, thus giving them a sense of community and identity. A common assertion by most respondents was that Pamoja FM was part of their lives, since it understands their problems, and is located in the heart of the slums where they reside.

The audience who were interviewed held a common conception that the setting up of Pamoja FM in the heart of where they reside has attracted them to tune in and listen to the broadcasts of the station since they can identify with it. They feel that the station is part of them and that it understands their unique problems. According to reference [5], local and national governments can engage community radio stations to push for socio-economic development of communities. Community radio stations readily provide the platform through which development partners can interact with members of communities. Government, together with development partners can take advantage of this to sensitise slum communities about their socio-economic development.

D. Economic Empowerment

The respondents elucidated that Pamoja FM had played a critical role in the success of their businesses as members of the community get information from the broadcasts has made it easier to expand their businesses, thereby getting access to more income.

Pamoja FM broadcasts programmes that are aimed at enlightening members of the community on how they can empower themselves economically. Such programmes such as Tuamke Pamoja educate the community on how to start viable

businesses and manage their incomes. The programme gives information on the relevant and viable areas of business development and skills. Listeners get the opportunity to be educated on the different types of businesses that they can run.

The respondents explained that such broadcasts at Pamoja FM have changed their mind-sets toward economic issues and have enabled the retail business owners to reach their targeted audience thus facilitating sales and economic growth. Several NGOs that operate in the Kibera area are usually invited for talk shows touching on how the residents can boost their socio-economic development.

When asked to give their opinions on community radio as a source of information for development, most respondents said that Pamoja FM educates them on economic issues, advertises products and services for residents and helps to make people aware of the development projects and opportunities in Kibera. Most respondents seemed to agree that Pamoja FM has helped to empower them economically.

The focus group discussion revealed that Pamoja FM has been providing informative and educative information on economic growth that is meant to benefit the locals. For instance, the station offers to advertise the products of locals, thus marketing their businesses and helping them rake in more profits. Youth in Kibera are also given the opportunity to get unpaid internships while working at the station. This gives them the opportunity to gain experience of working in a radio station, grow their skills and be part of the team dedicated to driving change in Kibera. The station is one of the greatest advocates of peaceful coexistence within the different communities inhabiting Kibera because it realises that people can only be economically empowered if there is adequate peace.

Pamoja FM has helped the community of Kibera to establish Pamoja Welfare Society and Pamoja Sacco. These two entities have so far enabled residents who register themselves as members to invest, save, and borrow money to establish and develop sustainable businesses.

E. Acting As A Government Watchdog

Pamoja FM has assumed a watchdog responsibility for the Kibera community that it serves. The station has a team that monitors all government-funded projects taking place in the community to ensure that due process is being followed. Secondly, the station has also taken up the role of reporting corruption cases that are likely to affect the community. Pamoja FM has solely dedicated a number of programmes aimed at promoting quality community projects [16]. An example of such a programme is one known as "crime stoppers". This programme converses issues of crime reporting and informs the community on matters of personal safety, security, crime reporting, and economic development. Twenty-five respondents who filled the questionnaires explained that they got to know of government projects at community level through Pamoja FM. They also revealed that the station has been educating them on the obligations of the government when such community projects are underway so that they can hold the government accountable in case due process is not followed.

F. Community/Public Mobilisation

Development and mobilization go hand in hand since mobilization involves the gathering and deploying of critical resources such as human and financial resources necessary for the completion and fruition of a project. Pamoja FM has become a voice to reckon with in Kibera when it comes to calling the community to action whenever the need arises. Through the station's initiative, a number of networks and groups of interests have been created to bring the members of the community together at times of need. For instance, Pamoja Welfare, Pamoja Sacco and Kibera Women for Peace and Fairness are just but a few. Most of these networks and groups consist of people who did not know each other before but were brought together for a common cause. Some of these networks such as Pamoja Sacco have even gone steps further and received formal registration to enable their members to benefit more from them.

Through Pamoja FM, members of the community are able to help one another when one of their own is facing challenges such as bereavement, lack of school fees, lack of employment or is having high hospital bills just to name a few. The station broadcasts such pleas to members of the community and calls them out to assist one of their own. Many success stories have been realized through such initiatives since bright but needy students have been put into schools and those with high hospital bills have received contributions from members of the community to help offset them. Funeral and wedding announcements are also done for residents at no cost.

Reference [17] argues that community radio is a crucial part of the communication process that aids in social change because of its potential to facilitate participation and inclusion in development agendas. Most times, if community radio is part of the communication process in development agenda, the results include peace building, achievement of development goals, and reduction of poverty, accountability and good governance. Radio is one mass media platform that has proven to be very impactful in shaping and driving the development agenda of the communities they serve [18]. Community radio provides a forum through which issues affecting a community can be discussed, ideas exchanged, and remedial measures undertaken.

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