

## Original Research Article

## Examining Participation of Dholuo FM Radio Programmes in Evacuation during Floods 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 dearth 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 various 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 a majority of the respondents received information on evacuation through Dholuo radio programmes they listened to. The study also established the existence of floods emergency measures and Disaster Committee which help in handling emergencies and also liaises with radio stations during disasters. While examining Dholuo radio stations participation in evacuation process, the study revealed that radio stations under the study participated by relaying information through their programmes.

**Keywords:** Media Effects, Flood Risk, Mitigation, Evacuation.

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### INTRODUCTION

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). The fact that flooding is an uncertain phenomenon, 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. In addition, evacuation during floods is meant to create the understanding among people affected by floods to move to safer places. When a crisis hits an entire community or nation, most people experience the event largely through the media (Rasinski, 2002). The media has the obligation to equip members of the public with knowledge on evacuation, and to provide them with early warning.

Radio is the most popular mass medium in Kenya especially in most rural areas, with radio stations broadcasting in different languages (Odhiambo, 2002). 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 to ascertain the extent to which Dholuo FM Radio programmes relay information on evacuation during floods in West Nyakach Division. According to Telg and Raulerson (2000), media coverage of disasters is often a very common occurrence, although media coverage is usually perceived as somewhat superficial and stereotypical level depicting stories that lead people to believe exaggerated circumstances that are associated with the most graphic and best-selling pictures. A study by Denga (1990) revealed that the flood hazard in the lower reaches of the Sondu/Miriu River showed that most of the response by the affected public is in terms of reinforcing the buildings to withstand the flood waters including raising the floor and building barrages outside the houses, and digging diversion canals round

the houses. It is, however, accepted that moving away from the flood plain during such events is a must and the houses are mainly reinforced so that on the return of the occupants, the houses will still be there. In line with this, Denga (1990) found that the people continued to occupy the flood plain as all or most of their economic activities were centered there including fishing, irrigated rice cultivation and other cultivation. Other factors which affect individual adjustment include income levels, hazard exposure and levels of education. Therefore, as asserted by Cate (1994), timely, accurate and sensitive communications in the face of natural hazards are demonstrated, cost-effective means of saving lives, reducing property damage and increasing public understanding of impending disasters. Responding to the news media following a mass disaster is crisis communication in action (Kelly, 1998).

The study focused on the evaluation of the role of Dholuo FM Radio programmes in flood risk management in West Nyakach Division. Households around Sangorota, Sangoburu, Nyamanyinga, Nyadina, Obange, and Nyong'ong'a in West Nyakach Division were visited. Radio programmes from Radio Ramogi and Radio Lake Victoria constituted sources of data for this study. 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, 1992). However, as PerezLugo (2004) argued, only a limited number of studies addressed this function of the media in natural disasters.

### 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.

## METHODOLOGY

### Study Sample

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.

### Data 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 then reported verbatim.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

These were the main findings of the paper:

**Table 1: Received information on evacuation through Dholuo radio programmes**

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	116	87.2
No	17	12.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>133</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Field data 2013

Table 1 presents data on received information on evacuation through Dholuo radio programmes. Out of 133 respondents, 87.2% acknowledged that they have received information on evacuation through Dholuo radio programmes. 12.8% did not receive the information. Based on the above findings, it is evident that the majority of the respondents received information on evacuation through Dholuo radio programmes. This concurs with (Rasinski, 2002) who asserted that, when a crisis hits an entire community or nation, most people experience the event largely through the media

During interview schedules with the programmes managers it was established that radio stations worked with the disaster committee and also

through their frequent dissemination to help in evacuation during disasters.

**Table 2: Floods emergency response measures**

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	119	89.5
No	14	10.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>133</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Field data 2013

The study sought to find out the emergency response measures respondents had specifically for floods. The availability of emergency response measures would be integrated with information gotten from the radio programmes to help minimize flood risks. From the above findings in Table-2 shows that 89.5% of the respondents who were the majority acknowledged the existence of floods emergency measures. These respondents further specified that they had Disaster Committee who handles emergencies, these committee members coordinate with members during the disaster.

**Table-3: Presentation of Dholuo Radio Stations Participation in Evacuation through their Programmes**

	Frequency	Percent
Relaying information	107	80.5
Actual evacuation	00	00
Liasing with other organization	26	19.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>133</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Field data 2013

Table 3 shows the respondents response to Dholuo Radio Stations Participation in Evacuation through their Programmes. From the above findings it is evident that radio stations participated in evacuation during floods by relaying information to the respondents, liasing with other organizations like Red Cross scored 19.5% which indicates that the coordination between radio stations and other organizations during evacuation while participation through actual evacuation did not score.

In an interview with radio programmes managers, it was revealed that there are programmes based on evacuation, even though radio stations do not participate in actual evacuation, they liaised with organization like Kenya Red cross to help people by relaying up-to-date information to the people affected.

## CONCLUSION

The following were the conclusions for the study aimed at Examining Participation of Dholuo FM Radio Programmes in Evacuation during Floods in West Nyakach Division, Kenya

The findings of the study revealed that a majority of the respondents received information on evacuation through Dholuo radio programmes they listened to. The study established the existence of floods emergency measures which the respondents further clarified that there is also Disaster committee who help in handling emergencies, this committee also liaises with radio stations during disasters. While examining Dholuo radio stations participation in evacuation process, the study revealed that majority of the respondents felt that the radio stations participated by relaying information through their programmes

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