

Community Radio and Development Communication in Urban Informal Settlements: Evidence from Pamoja FM in Kibera, Nairobi

Dr. Isaac Wamalwa Manje, PhD

Alupe University

Busia, Kenya

isaacmanje@gmail.com

Abstract— Community radio is widely recognized as a participatory medium capable of amplifying marginalized voices and supporting grassroots development. However, empirical evidence on how community radio operationalizes development communication in urban informal settlements remains limited. This study examines the messages, radio programmes, and community initiatives of Pamoja FM that are focused on development. Pamoja FM is a community radio station serving Kibera, Nairobi's largest informal settlement. Guided by participatory communication and social capital perspectives, the study adopts a qualitative case study design, drawing on in-depth interviews with station staff, focus group discussions with regular listeners, and documentary analysis. The findings show that Pamoja FM integrates development communication through participatory programming, strategic partnerships with community-based organizations, and audience-driven initiatives addressing health, economic empowerment, governance, gender equality, youth engagement, and social cohesion. Programmes such as *Tuamke Pamoja*, *Mwanamke Mwangaza*, and *Pass the Mic* function as platforms for dialogue, mobilization, and collective problem solving. While listeners report increased awareness, motivation, and community engagement, the station's developmental potential is constrained by financial limitations, infrastructural challenges, and regulatory pressures. The study contributes to scholarship on community radio and development communication by demonstrating how locally embedded media practices foster social capital and participatory development in urban slum contexts.

Keywords—*Participatory communication; Community radio; Development communication; Urban informal settlements; Slum communities; Media and development; Grassroots media.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Community radio has positioned itself as a powerful tool for fostering development, particularly in marginalized urban informal settlements such as slum communities. Unlike mainstream commercial media, community radio prioritizes localized content, addressing the unique socio-economic challenges of underserved communities [21]. It serves as an accessible platform for participatory communication, enabling community members to voice their concerns, share ideas, and access critical information on development [1]. In Kenya, where urban informal settlements such as Kibera face persistent challenges such as poverty, unemployment, insecurity, and inadequate access to basic services and resources, community radio stations play a pivotal role in advocating for social change, development, and empowerment.

Pamoja FM, a community radio station based in Kibera, exemplifies the transformative potential of grassroots media. Since its inception, the station has dedicated significant airtime to broadcasting development-oriented programs and initiatives designed to address the pressing needs of Kibera residents. These programs not only disseminate vital knowledge on health, education, governance, and economic empowerment but also provide a platform for community-based organizations and self-help groups to engage with the public.

This study sought to explore the role of Pamoja FM in delivering development messages and fostering community-driven initiatives. By examining its programming, partnerships, and audience engagement strategies, this research sheds light on how community radio stations in slum areas contribute to local development. Using a qualitative case study approach, the study employed interviews, focus group discussions, and document reviews to analyze the station's impact from the perspectives of both its staff and listeners. In doing so, it highlights the potential of community radio as a catalyst for sustainable development in urban informal settlements.

The Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) [2] estimates that 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 [3]. Kibera is among the most marginalised urban slums in Nairobi Kenya when it comes to development. Many attempts have been made to bridge the development gaps in the area.

Marginalised communities are groups or communities within the larger society that have been side-lined 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].

Despite extensive scholarship on community radio and development communication, limited attention has been paid to the specific mechanisms through which community radio stations in urban informal settlements design development-

oriented content, mobilize community partnerships, and translate participatory communication into tangible community initiatives. This study addresses this gap by offering an in-depth qualitative analysis of Pamoja FM, thereby contributing empirical evidence from Nairobi's slum context and extending participatory communication and social capital theory within urban media development scholarship.

II. PROBLEM STATEMENT

While community radio is often assumed to promote development in marginalized contexts, there is limited empirical analysis of how development-focused messages are constructed, delivered, and experienced by audiences within urban informal settlements in Kenya.

Urban slums in Nairobi, such as Kibera, are characterized by pervasive challenges including poverty, unemployment, inadequate access to essential services, and limited opportunities for socio-economic development. Despite numerous government and non-governmental interventions, these communities often remain marginalized, with their voices rarely reflected in mainstream media narratives. This lack of representation underscores the need for alternative communication platforms that prioritize localized issues and empower residents to participate actively in their development.

Community radio has proven to be a vital tool for fostering development and facilitating participatory communication in marginalized settings. However, there is limited scholarly focus on the specific role community radio plays in disseminating development messages and fostering initiatives in urban slums. While Pamoja FM, a community radio station in Kibera, has gained recognition for its commitment to addressing the needs of its listeners, there is insufficient empirical evidence on how its programming and initiatives contribute to the social and economic transformation of the community it serves.

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].

This study sought to address this gap by investigating the development messages, radio programs, and initiatives of Pamoja FM. It examined how the station collaborates with community-based groups and empowers residents of Kibera to take an active role in their development. By doing so, the study provides insights into the potential of community radio as a vehicle for grassroots-driven development in urban informal settlements.

III. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Development Communication

Development communication is a field of study that focuses on the use of communication to foster social and economic progress. It emphasizes participatory approaches that engage local communities in addressing their challenges and finding sustainable solutions. EcoNews Africa, BBC World Service Trust and UNESCO [7] highlight the significance of grassroots media in promoting social change, especially in marginalized communities. In this context, community radio emerges as a key medium for facilitating participatory communication and addressing developmental challenges.

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 [8]. 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 [9]. 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 [10]. 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.

C. Role of Community Radio in Development

Community radio serves as a powerful tool for addressing localized issues in ways that mainstream media cannot. Its emphasis on inclusivity and participatory content enables marginalized communities to share their voices, access critical information, and participate in decision-making processes [8]. Studies from other countries, such as India and South Africa, demonstrate that community radio can improve literacy, health awareness, and civic engagement. In Kenya, where urban slums face a range of socio-economic challenges, community radio

stations such as Pamoja FM play a pivotal role in addressing community-specific needs. Community radio serves as an important medium for addressing socio-economic and cultural issues in slum areas. These stations are often characterized by participatory approaches that engage local residents in the process of communication and problem-solving.

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 be 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'etele in Makueni among others [10].

D. Community Radio in Urban Slums

Urban slums present unique challenges, including high population density, limited access to basic services, and socio-economic exclusion. In such settings, community radio offers a localized solution, bridging information gaps and empowering residents to address their shared challenges. Past research has explored how community radio amplifies marginalized voices and promotes community-driven development [11]. However, there remains a research gap on the specific development messages and initiatives broadcast by community radio stations serving Nairobi's informal settlements.

E. Programming and Content in Community Radio

The success of community radio hinges on its ability to create content that resonates with its audience. Development-oriented programs often focus on health, education, environmental sustainability, and economic empowerment. For example, Umande Trust Kibera [17] notes that effective programming in community radio aligns with the cultural and linguistic preferences of its audience. Pamoja FM exemplifies this approach with its programs which address issues of public concern in Kibera. Analyzing such programs provides insights into the strategies used by community radio to engage their audiences meaningfully.

F. Partnerships and Linkages in Community Radio

Community radio stations often collaborate with community-based organizations (CBOs), non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and other stakeholders to amplify their impact. These partnerships enhance resource mobilization and broaden the reach of development messages. According to Manje [21], such linkages are vital for sustaining community radio in resource-constrained environments. In the case of Pamoja FM, the station's partnerships with self-help groups and other organizations are central to its role as a development catalyst.

G. Challenges Facing Community Radio in Slums

Despite its potential, community radio faces significant challenges, including limited funding, inadequate infrastructure, and regulatory hurdles [3]. Stations in urban slums must also contend with security concerns, competition from mainstream media, and the difficulty of sustaining audience engagement. These challenges can undermine the station's ability to deliver consistent and impactful development messages. Addressing these barriers is critical for enhancing the role of community radio in slum areas.

H. Theoretical Framework: Participatory Communication and Social Capital Theory

This study is grounded in the participatory communication model, which emphasizes community involvement in content creation and dissemination [10]. It also draws on social capital theory, which examines how networks and relationships foster collective action and development [16]. Together, these theories provide a lens for understanding how Pamoja FM engages the Kibera community to promote development-oriented initiatives.

I. Research Gaps

Although existing literature highlights the general role of community radio in development, there is limited focus on its specific application in urban slums, particularly in Kenya. Few studies have examined the content, strategies, and outcomes of community radio programs targeting slum populations. This study seeks to fill this gap by analyzing Pamoja FM's role in disseminating development messages and fostering community-driven initiatives in Kibera.

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 through the use of 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. 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 through its messaging.

The analysis adopted the explanation building approach which 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.

D. Credibility and Trustworthiness

To enhance credibility and trustworthiness, data triangulation was employed by drawing on interviews, focus group discussions, and document analysis. Prolonged engagement with the study site and member checking during focus group discussions further strengthened the validity of the findings.

E. Ethical Considerations

Due to the vulnerability and marginalized status of the study population, the study took into consideration some key ethical concerns. Participation in the study was voluntary, and informed consent was obtained from all respondents before interviews and focus group discussions were conducted.

Participants were informed of the purpose of the study, the nature of their involvement, and their right to withdraw at any stage without consequence. To protect confidentiality and anonymity, pseudonyms were used in reporting findings, and no identifying personal information was disclosed.

Given the sensitive nature of discussions related to poverty, violence, and socio-economic exclusion, care was taken to conduct interviews and focus group discussions in a respectful and non-intrusive manner. The researcher ensured that all participants had an opportunity to contribute freely.

V. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This study sought to examine how community radio contributes to development in urban informal settlements through messages, radio programmes, and community initiatives focused on development. The findings showed that Pamoja FM operates as a participatory communication platform aimed at facilitating dialogue, mobilizing community networks, and supporting collective action within Kibera. The station actively engages listeners as co-producers of meaning and agents of development rather than functioning only as a channel for disseminating information. 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. Development Initiatives of Community Radio Stations

Pamoja FM has formed partnerships, linkages and collaborations with community-based groups that have the same ideologies and agendas that the station sets out to achieve. For instance, Kibera Women for Peace and Fairness is a self-help group that was founded by Respondent 2 in 2008 at the height of the post-election violence. 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 became evident that the PEV had worsened the economic situation in Kibera since many hardworking citizens lost their lives and property and businesses which 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. An oral interview with the founder of the self-help group, Respondent 2, who was at the station at the time of collection of this data for their weekly live community outreach programmes revealed that the agenda of the group has since been reshaped to ensuring that the community is engaged in shaping its own development agenda.

“The partnership between the group and Pamoja FM is centered on sensitising the community on the country’s development agenda, how they can be part of it, and what the government owes them as citizens in terms of development. Pamoja FM still plays a crucial role in development of the area since it has given them a platform through which they can engage with the entire Kibera community and continuously enlighten them about the importance of peace for development.” (Respondent 2)

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.

These initiatives exemplify the station’s role as a community mobilizer. They align with Manje’s [21] assertion that partnerships enhance the sustainability and impact of community media. Through these activities, Pamoja FM demonstrates the practical application of social capital theory by leveraging community networks to foster collective action.

B. Participatory Programming and Development Communication

Pamoja FM utilises a participatory approach in the development of its programmes and broadcast content. Most of its programmes are created to cater for the interests of the listeners. Listeners actively contributed to programme content, discussions, and thematic direction. The station offers several programs dedicated to addressing development issues in the community. Key programs include:

- i. **Tuamke Pamoja:** A morning show that discusses topical issues such as governance and community development. The programme airs radio discussions that have created a platform for the residents of Kibera to come together and form welfare groups and Sacco's that have made it possible for them to acquire business loans to start and expand their business. This has been promoting the economic empowerment of the people of Kibera. The programme encourages residents to wake up early and venture outside to explore the opportunities awaiting them instead of being lazy and sitting idle waiting for opportunities to come to them. Good examples are the Pamoja Welfare Society and Pamoja Sacco which were conceptualised by the radio station in collaboration with the residents. Residents who register themselves are allowed to save, invest and borrow money to establish businesses.

In the words of Respondent 3:

“Hii kipindi hunipea syke ya kuamka mapema na kuamsha maarif wangu twende huko nje tukahussle tujitafie kamkate angalau badala ya kukaa kungoja tusaidiwe na kuombaomba.”

This loosely translates to:

“This radio programme motivates me to wake up early and wake up my friends so that we can go out there and hustle instead of just sitting and waiting to be helped and begging.”

Such narratives suggest that participatory programming fosters a sense of agency and collective efforts. This reinforces the participatory communication theory by illustrating how media driven by dialogue can catalyze behavioral orientation towards self-initiated development.

- ii. **Mwanamke Mwangaza:** A program targeting women, focusing on empowerment, education, and health.
- iii. **Pass the Mic:** A platform for youth to share ideas and participate in discussions about their future.
- iv. **Pamoja Machweo:** An evening show addressing social issues like family relations and community well-being. The programme gives listeners a platform through which they can share their experiences of the

day as they went about their daily hustles. Listeners give their views, challenges and opportunities that they encountered as they ventured out to hustle. This gives listeners hope, encouragement and information about new opportunities that they can explore to empower themselves.

Participatory communication theory emphasizes dialogue, local ownership, and the co-creation of meaning rather than top-down message transmission [5]. The findings indicate that Pamoja FM operationalizes these principles by integrating audience experiences, vernacular language, and interactive formats such as call-ins, live discussions, and listener-led storytelling.

The diversity of programs underscores Pamoja FM's holistic approach to addressing development challenges. This supports Bhattacharya's [19] observation that community radio's success lies in creating culturally and contextually relevant programming.

C. Key Development Themes and Community Relevance

Analysis of programme and message content revealed the following recurring development themes:

- i. **Health Awareness:** Messages focused on hygiene, disease prevention, HIV/AIDS among other health matters.
- ii. **Economic Empowerment:** Information on income-generating activities, financial literacy, and micro-entrepreneurship.
- iii. **Social Cohesion:** Messages promoting peacebuilding, conflict resolution, security, harmony, tolerance, and community unity.
- iv. **Governance:** Public watchdog role, leadership, elections, rights and privileges, obligations, unearth corruption, and crime reporting etc.
- v. **Youth Empowerment:** Promoting skills training, entrepreneurship, education, and substance abuse prevention.
- vi. **Gender Equality:** Addressing sexual gender-based violence and promoting women's participation in development activities and initiatives.
- vii. **Environmental Awareness:** Campaigns on waste management and environmental conservation.
- viii. **Civic Education:** Educating the community on governance issues, elections, and public participation.
- ix. **Crisis Response:** Providing assistance and guidance during emergencies, such as disease outbreaks like COVID-19, natural disasters, and unrest brought about by demonstrations.

These themes reflect the lived realities of the residents of Kibera. They demonstrate the station's responsiveness to the priorities identified by the community itself. Aligning programme content to community need shows the importance of contextual relevance in development communication [21].

Rather than imposing externally defined agendas, Pamoja FM facilitates locally grounded discussions that resonate well the everyday experiences of its listeners. This approach enhances message credibility and reinforces trust between the station and its audience, which is critical in sustaining community engagement.

These findings align with Girard [18], who emphasizes the role of community radio in bridging knowledge gaps in underserved areas. They also highlight the participatory approach of Pamoja FM, as the content reflects the specific needs and interests of Kibera residents.

D. Programme Formats at Pamoja FM for Development-Focused Content

The study established that Pamoja FM uses the following program formats to disseminate development-focused content:

- i. Interactive talk shows where experts and community members are engaged and provided with a platform to discuss pressing issues.
- ii. Edutainment where drama, music, and storytelling are utilized to educate audience about development issues while entertaining.
- iii. Call-In Programs that allow listeners to voice their opinions and concerns directly.
- iv. Youth Shows which provide platforms for young people to discuss their aspirations and challenges and also receive advice regarding their issues.

E. Challenges Faced in Development-Focused Messaging, Programming and Initiatives

Despite its contributions to development, Pamoja FM faces structural constraints that limit its effectiveness. These challenges highlight the broader political and economic conditions under which community media operate. They continue to demonstrate the need for supportive policy and funding environments. The study established that Pamoja FM faces the following challenges in development-focused messaging, programming and initiatives:

- i. Financial Constraints: Limited funding affects quality and reach.
- ii. Technical Issues: Inadequate broadcasting equipment and infrastructure.
- iii. Political Pressure: Risk of censorship or interference from local authorities.

- iv. Low Literacy Levels: Hinders the ability of audiences to fully engage with certain programs.

IV. CONCLUSION

This study makes an original contribution to development communication scholarship by providing empirical evidence on how community radio operationalizes participatory communication within an urban informal settlement. The study integrated participatory communication and social capital theories. By doing so, it demonstrates how programming focused on development and community partnerships foster dialogue, trust, and collective action among marginalized populations. Unlike studies that treat community radio's developmental role in abstract terms, this research offers insights that are specific to slum contexts from Kibera. This extends theoretical understanding of grassroots media practice in urban slum environments.

Participants reported that Pamoja FM has significantly influenced their lives. Listener feedback highlighted that Pamoja FM has improved access to critical information, enhanced community engagement and awareness of local issues, and empowered marginalized groups, particularly women and youth. The study identified several challenges faced by the station, including limited funding, technological constraints, and regulatory issues which hinder the station's full potential. Pamoja FM disseminates targeted development messages that address critical issues such as health, education, economic empowerment, and social cohesion. These messages resonate with the community's needs and contribute to raising awareness and driving local initiatives.

The station's programs, such as Tuamke Pamoja and Mwanamke Mwangaza, provide platforms for addressing specific community challenges while promoting inclusivity and participatory communication. Pamoja FM also actively collaborates with community-based organizations and self-help groups, leveraging these partnerships to amplify its developmental impact.

The station has empowered residents by providing information, fostering dialogue, and creating opportunities for community engagement. However, challenges such as limited funding, technological constraints, and regulatory barriers hinder its full potential.

This study contributes to development communication scholarship by demonstrating how community radio in urban slums operates not merely as an information channel, but as a participatory institution that mobilizes social capital, supports grassroots initiatives, and mediates development discourse within marginalized communities.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the study's findings, the following recommendations are proposed to enhance the role and impact of community radio in the development of slum areas:

For Community Radio Stations

1. Diversify Funding Sources

Pamoja FM and similar stations should explore multiple revenue streams, such as grants, advertising partnerships, and crowdfunding, to ensure financial sustainability.

2. Invest in Technological Upgrades

Upgrading equipment and infrastructure can improve broadcast quality and expand the station's reach.

Leveraging mobile platforms and social media to complement traditional broadcasts.

3. Expand Programming

Develop additional programs that address emerging issues such as climate change, digital literacy, and mental health to meet evolving community needs.

Ensuring programs are audience-driven for relevance.

For Policy Makers

1. Streamline Regulatory Processes

Simplify licensing procedures and offer incentives to community radio stations serving marginalized populations.

2. Provide Financial Support

Introduce funding schemes or subsidies to support the operations of community radio stations in underserved areas.

For Development Partners and NGOs

1. Strengthen Partnerships

Collaborate with community radio stations to amplify development campaigns and initiatives. Provide resources, funding, and technical support to enhance the stations' capacity.

2. Capacity Building

Organize training programs for community radio staff on content development, creation, management, audience engagement, and leveraging digital tools.

For the Community

1. Promote Active Participation

Encourage community members to engage more actively with radio programs by contributing ideas, participating in discussions, and providing feedback.

1. Conduct comparative studies of multiple community radio stations in different slum areas, especially globally, in order to understand the diversity in approaches and outcomes.
2. Investigate the long-term impact of community radio on specific development indicators such as education, health, and economic empowerment.
3. Explore the integration of digital technologies in community radio to enhance outreach and engagement.

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VI. SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

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