

## History of Community and Indigenous Language Mass Media Evolution in Turkana County from 1963-2022

By Josephat Nairutia Kemei<sup>\*</sup>, Kizito Muchanga Lusambili<sup>‡</sup> & Pontian Godfrey Okoth<sup>°</sup>

*This paper examines the history of community and indigenous language mass media evolution in Turkana County from 1963-2022. It adopted a qualitative research approach. This is because, it involved collecting and analyzing non-numerical data through; texts, video, or audio. This was done in-order to understand concepts, opinions and also experiences from various respondents. It also used to gather in-depth insights into a problem or generate new ideas for this research. The paper highlighted on the pros and cons that has hit the Turkana community since 1963 on their interaction with the fourth estate in terms of social, political and economic development as compared to other communities in the country. The study was conducted in Turkana county, which is the area occupied by the Turkana people. Its focus was on the farmers, pastoralist, traders, politicians and administrators. The research illuminates on the impact of indigenous mass media empowerment to the community by use of vernacular language. That's why it discusses on its evolution and the impact it has created to the Turkana Community of Turkana County in Kenya. The research is significant in that, it informs the marginalized communities on the utilization of indigenous mass media to empower themselves in terms of socially, economically and politically by receiving regular and updated information from experts.*

### Introduction

Mass media can promote the climate of socio-economic development in different ways. The media have the ability to report and inform the people on a variety of matters. They can help broaden horizons and help to develop the quality of empathy (the capacity to see oneself in the other fellows' situation).<sup>1</sup> They can focus attention on certain topics such as political campaigns, a new agricultural practice, cultural practices, education programmes, commerce/trading programmes or even a new health programme.<sup>2</sup> They can raise aspirations and also can create a desire on the part of individuals to desire a better life. The mass media can help only indirectly to change strongly held attitudes or valued

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<sup>\*</sup>Graduate Student, Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology, Kenya.

<sup>‡</sup>Senior Lecturer, Muliro University of Science and Technology, Kenya.

<sup>°</sup>Professor, Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology, Kenya.

1. W. Schramm, *Mass Media and National Development* (Stanford University Press, 1964), 21.

2. *Ibid*, 22.

practices.<sup>3</sup> They can infer status and prestige upon an individual; they can provide a way to build leadership among political leaders in a given community. They can also broaden political discussion and policy making at the village level.<sup>4</sup>

### Literature Review

According to Ram Pratap Singh, the evolution of indigenous mass media in India was started by Carey and Marshman of Serampore, who published the first vernacular newspaper in India, *Samachar Darpan*, on May 31, 1818.<sup>5</sup> It began during the reign of Lord Hastings. It was until 1878 when the father of vernacular journalism, Lord Lytton introduced the Vernacular Press Act in 1878. In India, the indigenous mass media plays a significant role in the society. For example, Community media give voice to those people whose interests and perspectives are marginalized and ignored by the mainstream media organizations.<sup>6</sup> In the era of globalized and urban-oriented corporate media, it is the community media which cares about local concerns. It has been observed in the past that corporate driven media organizations have very limited role in community mobilization and development but they have affected a lot to local culture. Community media have a significant role in shaping community life and its development. They may support the diversified views and provide a platform to those who are excluded and oppressed.<sup>7</sup> From the work Ram Pratap, he has not satisfactorily addressed the role of community media in India despite it being in operation since the early 19<sup>th</sup> Century. However, in relation to the brief knowledge he has informed the audience, his work will help the researcher in this study to address the evolution and role of indigenous mass media among the Turkana community of Turkana County since Kenyan independence. The study further used the knowledge of Ram Pratap to talk about social, economic and political development that may have been achieved, if any, by indigenous mass media in Turkana County. Furthermore, this work by Ram Pratap, was an avenue of addressing the importance of community media in general among the Turkana community of Turkana County.

According to James Orao, since the introduction of multiparty politics in 1992, Kenya has witnessed unprecedented growth in the media sector.<sup>8</sup> From one

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3. W. James, *Psychology; Briefer Course* (New York: Holt, 1923), 87.

4. M. F. Milikan and D. L. M. Blackner, *The Emerging Nations* (Boston: Little Brown, 1961), 23.

5. P. S. Ram, "The Role of Community Media in Social Change and Development in India," *International Journal of Research Culture Society* 6, no. 5 (2022): 72-76.

6. *Ibid*, 72.

7. T. Nnaemeka et al. (1989). *Op. Cit.*, p. 34.

8. O. James, "The Kenyan indigenous languages and the mass media: Challenges and opportunities," *Stellenbosch Papers in Linguistics PLUS* 38 (2009): 77-86.

national broadcaster in radio and television and three main newspapers up until the mid-1990s, the number of radio stations, especially FM radio stations, has grown exponentially. This uncontrolled growth can be confirmed from the government's claims that they have run out of frequencies to allocate to new applicants. The floodgates opened with the licensing of the first ever FM station in Kenya, Capital FM, in 1996. Since then, the number of FM stations targeting different age groups and classes has risen. Broadcasting in the local languages<sup>9</sup> has also undergone the same kind of growth, with almost each of the major towns hosting FM stations broadcasting regionally or nationally.

For a very long time the local languages had to contend with limited air-time from the national government-owned broadcaster, KBC<sup>10</sup> approximately 4 hours daily, divided into two segments, for the approximately 18 local languages covered at the time. By 2007, there were several FM radio stations dedicated mainly to broadcasts in the various local languages. Royal Media, a private media company, led in this field with more than six FM radio stations broadcasting in various local languages: Change FM, Egesa FM, Mulembe FM, Muuga FM, Inooro FM, and Ramogi FM. Other indigenous language FM stations included Kameme FM and Cooro FM (Kikuyu), Lake Victoria FM (Dholuo), and Kass FM (Kalenjin). According to the BBC<sup>11</sup>, by 2007 the market share of these local language radio stations was 27% of the radio market, compared to 33% held by mainstream radio stations. From James O'rao's work, it's evident that, up to 2007, even the private media companies in Kenya, such as Royal Media services had not seen the need to establish a local radio station or any media in favor of the Turkana community of Turkana County. This segregation made the Turkana's to increasingly feel unrecognized in Kenya. This is because; they were left behind even in terms of getting the basic information that was to be provided to all Kenyans through the National news.

The aged were left behind. It is on this basis that this research interrogated the extent to which this community could have developed if the media could have served it the same way it did to other communities such as the Kalenjin, Kikuyu, Luo among others who were lucky to have media stations in their own dialect. Moreover, O'rao posits that the indigenous language radio stations keep increasing not only their number of listeners, but also their reach in the country, which has expanded from being concentrated in the urban areas to covering whole regions and, in some cases, the entire country. Importantly, this boom is not a result of governmental efforts to promote the use of the local languages in

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9. It is important to note that this is not the first time in Kenya's history that there have been indigenous language language mass media.

10. KBC's programming for the local languages is divided into Western Service (for the western regions of the country), Eastern Service (for the eastern regions) and Central Service (for the central regions).

11. BBC World Service Trust 2007.

broadcasting. These stations are in most cases private commercial ventures. As such, they are market oriented and their goal is primarily commercial. They have recognized, however, the fact that the indigenous languages are strong and play a key role in everyday communication in most of the communities in the country. While acknowledging this insight, it is also important to recognize the fact that any cultural promotion that the indigenous languages reap from the venture is purely accidental, an inevitable by-product. The current research focuses on this by-product.<sup>12</sup>

It's clear from Orao that the indigenous media may air some cultural practices of various communities and entertain their viewers. The question is, do these media houses get the concentrated cultures that are fully practiced by the said community? It is therefore imperative to clearly inform the audience through this work on the importance of local media in educating the society and even beyond the borders on the real cultures and traditions of that community. This is because, the local media have an opportunity to reach the epicenter of the community and draw first-hand information from the natives. Therefore, this study filled this gap by addressing the importance of local media in educating the viewers and its listeners on its culture and how important the culture is to them and to other communities at large.

From the works of Orao, indeed the aforementioned developments of the mass media, especially FM radios, in the Kenyan local languages have been received with mixed reactions from different quarters of the Kenyan society. While the ordinary Kenyans received them wholeheartedly, praising their presentation of the current affairs programs in more accessible languages, some in the ruling elite dismissed them as divisive forces that strive to highlight ethnicity and thus divide Kenya along tribal lines. The impact of the mass media generally on its target groups need not be reiterated here. To date there has been no research on whether or not the mass media in the indigenous language is capable of exerting influence on the indigenous language they employ.<sup>13</sup> It is on this basis that this research evaluated the concrete impact of the mass media empowerment on the socio-economic development among the Turkana community of Turkana County.

From Orao, the mass media have something to offer the target local language communities and, by extension, the indigenous languages used in these communities. Conversely, the local language communities have something to offer the producers of the mass media. This is called symbiotic constellation. In this constellation, it is argued that the media need the language communities just as much as the language communities have learnt to rely on the mass media for

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12. O. James (2009). *Op. Cit.*, 77.

13. *Ibid*, 77.

services.<sup>14</sup> In discussing the symbiotic relationship between the mass media and the indigenous languages, a number of pertinent questions need to be asked: What is the role of the mass media in relation to the indigenous languages? Where are the possible convergent zones for the emerging mass media and the local languages? And, what could be gained, or lost, by the indigenous languages? Orao did not address these questions, and if done, it was partially that could not easily be recognized. In this study, these questions tended to address what it may refer to be the core of the symbiotic relationship. In this case, this study didn't thus look at them systematically, because they tended to overlap and pre-empt each other. Instead, it outlined the symbiotic constellation in order to give an impression of the challenges and the options that this development poses for the mass media, the indigenous languages and the language planners, as well as the government, as an important role player in language management.

Additionally, Orao, agrees that indigenous language media could play several roles within the target local language communities, of which socio-economic gain is the most obvious one. Significant for this study, however, are two specific roles namely; developing a public sphere within the given language community, thereby allowing the community to participate in creating its own news agenda, and secondly in providing an indication that the indigenous languages are sufficiently developed to cope with a fast changing world and, therefore, to effectively cater for the communicative and social needs of their speakers.

According to Gathigi and Brown, they assert that; indigenous language radio has, indeed opened up new avenues and opportunities for the development of the various local languages in Kenya. They maintain that when listening to the FM stations in Kenya, one is confronted with numerous interactive shows that are on offer.<sup>15</sup> The programming ranges from breakfast shows (with news and political commentaries and live call-ins) to those dealing with any number of interesting social issues of the day. That these are undertaken in the indigenous languages, which for a long time had been condemned as being unfit for public communication, exemplifies the way the mass media have created new opportunities for collective participation and have redefined the resources for self-definition. The increased role of the indigenous language mass media can be read from the reactions to and accusations leveled against their role in the early 2008 ethnic violence in Kenya. Being conscious of the deep connections between political, economic, historic and symbolic orders in Kenya, they view the mass

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14. Important in this consideration is the fact English is not only the official language but also the language of instruction in the education system. Kiswahili, on the other hand, enjoys the status of the national language. The two languages thus command more speakers than any other indigenous language in Kenya.

15. G. W. Gathigi and D. H. Brown, The new public sphere: radio and democracy in Kenya. *Media and Technology in Emerging African Democracies* 105 (2010).

media as a significant apparatus for the development of the various indigenous language communities.

They add that the mass media have the capacity to ensure a continued cultural flow beyond language borders and are thus capable of connecting language communities beyond their ethnic boundaries. The developments sketched above show that with proper infrastructure, the indigenous languages are also in a position to develop to the point where they are usable in public interaction. The relationship between the mass media and the local Kenyan music industry presents an encouraging case. Since their inception, the FM radio stations, social media platforms and the locally owned television channels have been on the forefront of promoting local Kenyan (and East African) music.<sup>16</sup> It is on this basis that this study will want to assess the place of Turkana community in the media fraternity. Furthermore, Githigi has not explained how the media industry has empowered the local communities using the indigenous language to propagate economic development through various information that they pass to the audience. This study addressed this gap by illuminating on how the local media leads to socio-economic success in the local communities especially on the Turkana of Turkana County.

Githigi and Brown further alludes that; apart from the debates regarding policy-backed stipulation of time allocation for the locally produced media content on Kenyan mass media, the FM stations themselves recognized not only the gap that existed for local music due to the KBCs concentration on western music but also the profitable venture that existed in partnerships with local musicians and producers. This marketing insight has ensured that both parties, the FM stations and the local music industry, have developed based on a symbiotic relationship.<sup>17</sup> The insights and infrastructure that have promoted local music could (with guidelines formulated to address the issues raised above by the linguists and language researchers) also promote the various indigenous languages employed by the mass media. Having examined the roles that mass media play in promoting and developing the indigenous languages in order to empower socio-economic developments in the society, it is evident therefore, to maintain that local media mostly aims at economically exploiting a market and making a profit. Their continued services to the indigenous languages are on condition of assured financial profit. This commercial venture leads to successful economic developments in the society.<sup>18</sup> In a multi-ethnic society such as Kenya, where politics of ethnicity (and therefore ethnolinguistic) rivalry abound, many local languages see the need to assert themselves. What the duo did not address here, is how the mass media can be used as a peace mouth piece in the society. Therefore, this study

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16. *Ibid*, 106.

17. *Ibid*, 83.

18. *Ibid*, 84.

filled this gap by expounding on the place of mass media in peace development in Turkana County.

According to Omwanda, indeed in Kenya, especially in the recent past, the indigenous language mass media have become further arenas for politics and ethnic self-assertion. The mass media provide one very important avenue for this self-assertion via interplay of the mass media, politics, and ethnicity or "ethnic journalism".<sup>19</sup> The mass media, on the other hand, see their survival in tapping the mostly "virgin" resources of the indigenous languages. With the high number of FM stations targeting the youth, and therefore broadcasting mostly in English and Sheng,<sup>20</sup> the indigenous language FM radio stations target the rural folk in their own languages, therefore claiming a niche that is likely to ensure their economic survival in the competitive field. Omwanda has not clearly stipulated how the mass media in the indigenous language has impacted on the politics of the society neither has he elaborated on the extent to which it has reduced tension that arises during election period in the country. This study sought to explain how the local mass media aids in controlling the politics of hatred in the society with reference to Turkana County. It also explained on how these media stations have enriched the young generation with their indigenous language so as to avoid being swallowed by the sheng world that is not in any way official. This in turn enabled the study to elaborate on how the uses of local language in various local media stations and platforms have made the economy of the land to grow.

## Methodology

This paper adopted a qualitative research approach. It involved collecting and analyzing non-numerical data through; texts, video, or audio.<sup>21</sup> This was done in-order to understand concepts, opinions and also experiences from various respondents. It also used to gather in-depth insights into a problem or generate new ideas for this research. The study anticipated employing historical research design. Historical research design is a plan or strategy within which a researcher collects data systematically and evaluates them by relating them to the past occurrences in order to establish the causes, effects or trends of those

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19. L. O. Omwanda, *The mass media and democracy: Understanding the problem of objectivity in multicultural settings*. In M. Odero and E. Kamweru (Eds.) (2000): 203-224.

20. Originating from the slums of Eastlands in Nairobi, Sheng has developed into a sociolect very common in many Kenyan urban centres. In its many varieties, it consists mostly of modifications of combinations from English and Kiswahili. Depending on the locality of the urban centre, it is also laced with borrowings from the surrounding language communities. Thus, standard Sheng as such does not exist. In fact, even in Nairobi alone one tends to note differences depending on which part of the city the speaker comes from.

21. E. Babbie and J. Mouton, *The Practice of Social Research* (Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 2002), 71.

occurrences with the aim of using the data to understand and explain the past or present and/or future anticipated events.<sup>22</sup> In the historical research design, the writings are basically descriptive, they begin with a narration of events in a time sequence, and their analysis addresses the questions of explanation, relationship, and consequences of events.<sup>23</sup>

The study population of this study included the inhabitants of Turkana community from Turkana County. This included farmers, traders, educationists and media community from the area. This study targeted the people of Turkana south in the areas of Kainuk, Lokichar and Katilu. This study adopted convenience sampling method. This sampling procedure allowed available primary data source to be used in this research without any additional requirements. This method also involved getting participants wherever you can find them and typically wherever is convenient. The study used both the primary and secondary sources. In the primary sources, it used questionnaire, Oral and Key informant interviews, focus group discussions and finally observations. In the secondary sources, it utilized historical archives. Libraries were vastly used to gather secondary data. Journals, reports, books, theses that have been published or unpublished, and social networks (you tube videos), were also used.

## Discussion

According to Naspaan, Turkana County has been one of the regions in Kenya that have faced decades of social, economic and political marginalization, with one of the highest levels of extreme poverty, illiteracy and continued vulnerability to droughts.<sup>24</sup> Devolution and decentralization of power as espoused in the Kenyan constitution of 2010, now provides new opportunities for economic and social transformation provided that communities are given the platform to voice their issues as well as to participate in decision making. Information is key in any society.<sup>25</sup>

While interrogating Moses Ekitela on the evolution of mass media in Turkana community, of Turkana County, he informed this study that, "indeed the quality of information is paramount". He supported his assertion by alluding that Turkana County for a long time has been faced by general lack of information and the proper channels to disseminate the same due to natural constraints and many challenges.<sup>26</sup> Recently, there is a paradigm shift due to fast

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22. P. Leedy, *Practical Research: Planning and Design* (Englewood: Prentice Hall, 1997), 190.

23. Ibid, 190.

24. Ibid, 4.

25. T. O. Olila, *Citizens' Voices: Citizens Participation in Devolved Government* (Nairobi: EAEP, 2013), 18.

26. Moses Ekitela (32 Years), Key Informant Interview, 23/11/2022.



dissemination of information to the community. In Turkana County, public advocacy and general interest in governance is slowly growing, with an increasingly vibrant civil society and professional and student associations grounded in the community.<sup>27</sup> However, Ekitela posits that, despite the vibrancy that the local media has caused, there is a general reluctance and disinterest from the majority of the population to engage in governance discussions. In the past, most organizations and the government used chiefs who were mainly based in the urban or peri-urban centres as the main agents of communicating information to the local people/population.<sup>28</sup>

His sentiments were supported by Willy Lokiyor, who confirmed to this study that, indeed, this was a disadvantage to those based in the remote areas, who would either not receive the information or have to trek long distances to access it. Other channels of dissemination were through the village elders who were selected by the community to provide leadership and make major decisions on issues that affect the community. The downside of this approach of sharing information was that the chiefs and elders had focus on immediate issues affecting the people and in most cases made key decisions without necessarily engaging the community.<sup>29</sup>

Moreover, according to Wilson Lokiyor, development issues and government policies received little attention in Turkana County. According to him, the current trend with the current transition to decentralization, civil society has stepped up advocacy campaigns to enlighten indigenous Turkana people on various issues ranging from governance, development, human rights and access to justice, land and natural resources.<sup>30</sup> In the recent past, many environmental and human rights advocacy groups have been very active in sensitization on the impacts of oil exploration and how to allocate revenue to benefit the locals.<sup>31</sup> Therefore, from the two respondents, this study is convinced that Turkana County has remained mainly un-served by mainstream media since independence, with the little spotlight being informed only by disasters, especially recurrent droughts and insecurity.

The County has been experiencing communication barriers attributed to biased reporting and stereotype mentality among people and even major media houses when it comes to Turkana where dailies are read a day after others and

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27. J. C. Glenn, T. J. Gordon and E. Florescu, "2013-14 State of the Future," in *The Millennium Project* (2014), 25.

28. Moses Ekitela (32 Years), Key Informant Interview, 23/11/2022.

29. Ibid, 23/11/2022.

30. J. A. Apiyo, *Indigenous conflict resolution mechanisms among pastoralist communities in the Karamoja cluster - A case study of the Turkana* (Nairobi, Kenya: University of Nairobi, 2014).

31. Ibid, 23/11/2022.

“unofficially sold at double price because of “remoteness.”<sup>32</sup> As put forward by Naspaan, Joan Lemuya confirmed these allegations to this study when interrogated. She informed this study that, indeed, the image of Turkana community has been tarnished with some personalities and institutions taking advantage of recurring hunger and starvation to raise funds with no clear accountability for the assistance or aid given apart from there being no practical involvement in the setting of early warning systems to curb or mitigate against the cycle of tragedies.<sup>33</sup> Furthermore, Lemuya added that media has also become a critical platform to relay information, and various radio stations have opened in Turkana. They include: Maata FM, Sayare FM, Hosanna radio, Akicha FM and Radio Jambo. This has been a reliable source of information dissemination as most of Turkana residents like listening to radios due to the wide radio waves coverage in the County. Moreover, local newspaper publications existing in Turkana include: Turkana Mirror Newspaper, Turkana Times, and The Guardian, in addition to the national newspapers. They are bound to increase.<sup>34</sup>

From the oral interviews conducted by this study, it emerged that indeed Turkana community has developed positively as far as Technological mass media is concerned. The following history emerged as informed by a Key respondent to this study, Moses Ekitela with a focus group discussion from Lokichar alluding to the same sentiments put forward by him. That: Turkana community has a long history with mass media in Kenya since 1972. In this year, the then Voice of Kenya, which was later branded as Kenya Broadcasting Corporation (KBC), established a branch in the Eastern part of the country which was called KBC Eastern Service. This branch was meant to broadcast in local dialects among the communities that lived in the region.<sup>35</sup> These communities were majorly the Arid and semi-arid land (ASAL) based groups. They included: Rendile, Burji and Turkana. Thereafter, other groups were included, that is the Pokots, Samburu, Somali among others. In this effect, the Turkana language used to be allocated one hour per day from 1972 until 2017.<sup>36</sup> This was not allowing the community to access adequate information compared to other communities.

In the year 2008, with the help of Trans-world radio-Kenya, the first indigenous Turkana radio station known as Maata FM was established. It was stationed in Lodwar which by then appeared to be the urban town in the entire Turkana region. It was officially launched in 2010 and did broadcasting fully time. Up to the time of this study, Lodwar remains the urban and the only most developed town in Turkana County. Maata was established so as to advocate for

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32. M. Naspaan, *Information and Advocacy in Turkana County: Drylands Learning and Capacity Building Initiative for Improved Policy and Practice in the Horn of Africa* (DLCI, 2014), 5.

33. Joan Lemuya, Oral Interview, 24/11/2022.

34. Naspaan, (2014). *Op. Cit.*, 6.

35. Moses Ekitela (32 Years), Key Informant Interview, 23/11/2022.

36. FGD of Lokichar Community Development Association, held in Lokichar 10/11/2022.

peace in the land because there was a series of conflicts that was experienced between the Karamojong and Jie of Uganda, Topossa and Dongi'ro from Sudan who neighbored the Turkana community but shared the same dialect. Therefore, Maata was to champion for peace between them since they could receive the same message due to them understanding each other. The station used to cover a bandwidth of 80KM from Lodwar. This was very short radius to the vast Turkana County.<sup>37</sup>

In 2009, the Catholic Church, through the Catholic Diocese of Lodwar, established a local radio station, Akicha FM, to reach the local Turkana community. Their main aim in establishing this radio was to bring light to the people in matters to do with reaching them with the gospel. Furthermore, it based its program in matters to do with politics, social, economic and cultural matters affecting the lives of the Turkana people. Through this radio, the Catholic Church meant to civilize the community so as they can fit in the 21<sup>st</sup> century era. It covered a radius of around 80 KM from Lodwar to its surroundings.<sup>38</sup> Therefore, the study further records that, the Akicha radio, was used by Catholic Church to assist the people in reaching them and offering them basic assistance as the solutions to the problems encountered by the community. This is because, the radio station didn't purely broadcasted using Turkana dialect but it also infused Kiswahili and English in various programs covered. Therefore, it is the use of this radio that enlightened many Turkana's to be artists and others got to know matters of religion through regular evangelism conducted by the Catholic Church through this medium in Turkana community.

In 2010, a fully indigenous broadcasting radio known as *Ekisil* was born. It was established to assist in bringing about peace and harmony among the refugees and the host community, in the area by International Organization for Migration (IOM). It was stationed in Kakuma.<sup>39</sup> The main reason behind its establishment is that, the IOM observed that the area is frequently witnessing conflicts among the host community and the refugees.<sup>40</sup> In its programmes, the radio had set times to broadcast using Turkana dialect, and other was set differently basing on the language groups of the refugees accommodated in the refugee camp. It is still in operation to the time of this study. However it has even expanded its bandwidth to the central part of Turkana community as well as the Northern part.

In 2012, with the expansion of telecommunication technology, Ata Nayeche radio was established in Turkana West by a group of youths called Nayanae-Emeyen Youth Group who had an aim of promoting peace between the Karamojong, Jie, Topossa and Dongi'ro who bordered Turkana West Sub County

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37. Ibid.

38. Moses Ekitela (32 Years), Key Informant Interview, 23/11/2022.

39. Ibid.

40. Ibid.

which is inhabited by Turkana community.<sup>41</sup> Ata Nayeche was only covering a radius of 70 KM which meant that it only covered the western part of Turkana bordering Uganda and Sudan the genesis is traced to a grandmother Ata Nayeche, who is believed to be the mother of the conflicting communities since they are perceived relatives based on the oral tradition.

The study recorded that, there was a very wide gap that arise from 2012 to 2022 when the next media station was installed. This, according to Moses Ekitela, was culminated by the challenges of telecommunication waves in the County which was by then low unlike now where there are strong telecommunication waves in the region. Also, inadequate professional in the county made the issue of establishing more stations to stall for a while. This is also followed by the general ignorance of the community stakeholders due to the high cost of living in Turkana County.<sup>42</sup> This is due to the fact that, all the media's established in Turkana have taken the efforts made by non-governmental organizations and the groups. No single professional has made an effort to establish it as a business enterprise.<sup>43</sup>

In 2022, the latest indigenous language established radio station in Turkana County is Ejok FM, 87.9. This was achieved through the efforts of SAPCON which is a non-governmental organization. It is stationed in Lodwar which is a central point of Turkana County.<sup>44</sup> It covers the entire Turkana County unlike the aforementioned radio stations. Its purpose is not limited compared to Ata Nayeche, Maata and Ekisil radio stations. It is wider in its broadcasting scope, in that it advertises businesses within Turkana County, educates farmers and business people, promotes culture through airing dialectical songs, promotes political education by regularly interviewing politicians from Turkana and also provides a bigger room of youth programs to take of the future generation. Therefore, this radio station is very popular as per the time of this study yet it was still very new in the community.

As by 2022, during the time of this study, Turkana County had two TV stations namely Turkana TV which was initially known as Chocha TV and Ayok TV had been established. These two televisions played almost a similar role. They empowered the Turkana community by educating them on matters to do with economic, political and social developments. Also, they addressed on matters to do with talent nurturing, air Turkana community challenges to the world, do advertisement and marketing of Turkana scenery to the world. Lastly, they also checked on emerging issues that could make the Turkana community remain updated. According to Moses Ekitela, the painful part is that, both of them were only digital televisions which had no media houses compared to Inooro TV

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41. Ibid.

42. Ibid.

43. Ibid.

44. Ibid.

among the Agikuyu, Kass TV among the Kalenjins just to mention a few. However, despite this, it was a milestone in the Television broadcasting among the Turkana community.<sup>45</sup> This is because it majored on empowerment programs like business, music and art industry, leadership, farmers both in the farm and pastoralists. It is viewed globally hence selling the Turkana available opportunities to the world. This has acted as an avenue for more organization to visit the region in areas of agriculture, tourism, security and climate change.

Due to the remoteness and marginalization of this community by various sectors in the state, with mass media now being exposed as also marginalizing it, radio according to an FGD in Lokichar have played a significant role since 2008 when their establishments started.<sup>46</sup> Therefore, this study was interested in getting to know why the community radio such as Jambo radio, Maata FM, Radio Akicha, Ata Nayeche, Radio Ekisil and Ejok FM is so imperative. Moses Ekitela averred that; indeed, significance of community radio stations are widely recognized as the most basic, most connecting and most essential forms of community communication for the development of grassroots communities.<sup>47</sup> According to him, the focus of community radio on issues of utmost priority and concern to communities and are closer to community needs mainly distinguish them from the commercial and public radio stations. Moreover, the fact that community radio stations are established and sustained by non- profit entities means a media that is free and independent from commercial and state control other than the communities served.<sup>48</sup>

More importantly, community radio is the kind of community media that is easily able to act as a platform for social transformation.<sup>49</sup> This is more so because among many people, radio listenership is cheap and dominant, and has been enhanced by many radio receivers in rural homes and public transport as well as on mobile phones. Community radio is focused on being the media that is located in the endeavours of human kind to be free from want of any kind.<sup>50</sup> Therefore, this study found a number of indigenous mass media, operating in Turkana County. These media channels were very significant to this study as they provided out the roles they play in Turkana community and how they reach them.

It is very encouraging to record that Turkana community which was to some extent marginalized by the fourth estate has at least some print media that are

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45. Ibid.

46. FGD of Lokichar Community Development Association, held in Lokichar 10/11/2022.

47. Moses Ekitela (32 Years), Key Informant Interview, 23/11/2022.

48. T. Muswede, *Sustainability challenges facing community radio: a comparative study of three community radio stations in Limpopo Province* (2009).

49. Ngugi, *Raila in push for vernacular* (Daily Nation 2 September 2015).

50. Ibid.

well informative to the people and citizens of Turkana community at large. Some of the print media which are written in Turkana language are very instrumental in the airing of the grievances and opinions of the community of Turkana County.<sup>51</sup> This study recorded the following print media in Turkana community of Turkana County: Turkana Guardian Newspaper-Voices of a new dawn-was founded in 2014 by Turkana County government. It is a rising local newspaper that has print as well as electronic media and the internet through its website. Its target is to become an effective voice of the Turkana people. It has commitment to Turkana community as an information sharing platform in the areas of education, peace and security, environment among other issues. It also does advertising on Turkana tours and travel agency and Centre for Advocacy Relief & Development (CARD).

Turkana Mirror Newsletter- Making all voices count-was established in 2014 by Turkana Bio Aloe Organization (TUBAE). Turkana Mirror is the Turkana county monthly newsletter. The newspaper under the auspices of TUBAE is pursuing the media agenda as a tool to bridge the communication barrier as means of giving residents an alternative source of relevant and credible information on various aspects of development more so under the devolved system of government. The Mirror enhances information and news sharing and progressively updates the county residents on the daily happenings.<sup>52</sup> The main focus is on the socio-economic development in the county. Apart from the monthly publication, a daily highlight of crucial and important news is accessed in electronic form through a world web social network.<sup>53</sup> The publication focuses on breakthrough and successes in various development spheres, challenges, human interest stories which are unique to the county, service delivery and marketing of local innovation, products & services.

Turkana Times Newspaper- the Arid Voice, was founded in 2014 by the Turkana County government. It is a weekly newspaper that aims at educating, informing and entertaining. It is the premier county newspaper that seeks to fill the gap left by decades of neglect.<sup>54</sup> Conceived at the dawn of devolution, the newspaper has anchored its content on issue-based journalism to tell the untold Turkana story from the local context and perspective. The content also captures relevant cross border issues that are of interest to locals and those in the Diaspora. The newspaper is divided into various sections including art & culture, sports,

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51. L. B. Lihavi, *The role of radio in peace building: the case of the pokot-turkana conflict* (Nairobi, Kenya: University of Nairobi, 2020).

52. R. W. Ngugi and C. Oduor, *Review of status of public participation, and county information dissemination frameworks: a case study of Isiolo Kisumu Makuani and Turkana Counties* (2015), 22.

53. P. Palvia, N. Baqir and H. Nemati, "ICT for socio-economic development: A citizens' perspective," *Information & Management* 55, no. 2 (2018): 160-176.

54. C. S. Feibel, "A geological history of the Turkana Basin," *Evolutionary Anthropology: Issues, News, and Reviews* 20, no. 6 (2011): 206-216.

business, education, development, lifestyle, and opinion where a section on your voice where people write articles on pressing issues that needs to be addressed. The news is also available in electronic form through the website. Generally, the media has helped to ease the information barrier in the County and made the public informed of the progress and challenges faced as citizens are actively involved in their own development through the right institutions.<sup>55</sup> The publications have opened up for comments and contributions from various stakeholders enhancing information sharing in the county. TUBAE in partnership with Akicha Radio engage the county governments through press conference on quarterly basis where both the Governor and his executives address the county on current status of key county affairs, achievements, challenges encountered, mitigate measures deployed and plans for the next quarter.

The study also found that there is use of internet (online platforms) to obtain information in Turkana community. It emerged that the youth mainly use social media to form groups, especially Facebook group pages such as Turkana Professionals Association, Turkana County, Turkana County Legislative Assembly among others, as the main channels of information which only benefits the learned/educated and those can access internet phones or computers. Membership is a requirement to get or share information. Overtime, however, these group pages become political as the youth become manipulated by the politicians, especially as elections period nears. This limits personal freedom of expression which tends to constrain many members from contributing to status updates. Most educated people have been forced to stay in urban centres like Lokichar, Kainuk, Lodwar, Kakuma and Lokichogio because information circulates faster within these centres and also job advertisements may only be pinned at these centres making only those who are in other small centres without mobile phones and road networks get difficulties in accessing employment opportunities and vital information.

This study was further interested in assessing the place of organizations in disseminating information as a media channel to the community. This study found that, there are some active organizations that have persistently ensured that the locals receive information. One of the respondents, Achuka Kone interviewed by the researcher, postulated that; some community based organizations like the Turkana Women Advocacy and Development Organization (TWADO) through partnership with Transparency International have been able to form social audit groups in few centres to follow up initiated projects at the community level in Turkana County, as well as act as a source of information to the community.<sup>56</sup> She added that, for example 'Uwajibikaji Pamoja' is a platform

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55. C. Reuter and M. A. Kaufhold, "Fifteen years of social media in emergencies: a retrospective review and future directions for crisis informatics," *Journal of Contingencies and Crisis Management* 26, no. 1 (2018): 41-57.

56. Achuka Kone (62 Years), Oral interviews, 24th/11/2022.

initiated by Transparency International that aims to improve service delivery to the residents of Turkana County and to facilitate the referral of complaints from one service provider to another. Achuka Kone further alluded that; by giving citizens a voice, key developmental issues are followed up on and information is enhanced at the grassroots level. However, the paradoxical part of it all as per her is that; despite the fact that CBOs are on the rise in Turkana County, it is difficult to pinpoint what most of them have achieved, despite claiming to be working for the community.<sup>57</sup> Joan Lemuya, supported Achuka Kone by informing this study that despite the existence of these organizations,

...many of them are not sustainable and do not have the capacity to mobilize resources. Some have been formed with the aim of implementing projects on behalf of INGOs, but die immediately the projects end.<sup>58</sup>

Nevertheless, some CBOs are doing a great job, a case in point is the Turkana Bio Aloe Organization currently known as TUBAE African Development Trust which has promoted diversification of livelihoods in its advocacy strategies to address poverty and improve living standards of the Turkana people.<sup>59</sup> It has also done media advocacy and building capacities and supporting vulnerable groups on sustainable exploration and conservation of endangered environment.<sup>60</sup> For instance, existence of networks such as TWADO of CBOs provides legal advice to assist women facing domestic violence, rape, and divorce. It advocates against early marriages, which is common in Turkana community, and women's lack of rights in property inheritance with the aim of reducing these harmful cultural traditions and improving the visibility of women in the society.<sup>61</sup> From the preceding statement respondent Joan Lemuya adds that, in order to foresee socio-economic development, Centre for Advocacy, Relief and Development (CARD) was established as an oversight body aimed to improve social and economic status of Turkana people.

Furthermore, according to Joan Lemuya, there are other organizations advocating on various issues ranging from development such as Turkana Development Organization Forum (TUDOF) while others focus on promoting peace, natural resource management, among others. Generally from Joan Lemuya, Turkana County does not have clear ways of gathering and disseminating information since most of it is done through informal social sites like Facebook,

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57. Ibid.

58. Joan Lemuya (38 Years), Oral interviews, 24th/11/2022.

59. M. Blakeney and G. M. Alemu, "Geographical indications in Africa: opportunities, experiences and challenges," *Experiences and Challenges* 38, no. 5 (2016).

60. K. Nurse, "Culture as the fourth pillar of sustainable development. Small states," *Economic Review and Basic Statistics* 11 (2006): 28-40.

61. G. Schmidt, *Violation of Women Rights Seen from a Kenyan Perspective* (Maryknoll Institute of African Studies, 2006), 54.



local newspapers and radio stations and also through area chiefs who do not reach everybody. Advocacy is also not well established. At the same time, community has reaped little social and economic benefits.

The response of Joan Lemuya is in agreement with Naspaan, who attests in her work that, “hopefully with time, advocacy will hit base as the County is at the point of interest of many developers”.<sup>62</sup> Furthermore, Naspaan records that; according to Service Delivery Indicators (SDI) programme during data support programme workshop in July 2010 in Lodwar, it was noted that the local authorities are not always willing to provide organizations and also the community with data.<sup>63</sup> A case in point is the CIDP (County Integrated Development Plan) as an example of data the county government has perpetually delayed or turned down.<sup>64</sup> Therefore, these study nodes that, without this data, these organizations would find it difficult to carry out their advocacy mission. Moreover, all the above development issues will not be met if information does not trickle down to the communities and back to the authorities, and if advocacy cannot be the main agenda of individuals and groups in the entire county.

## Conclusion

This paper concludes that indeed there is history of the evolution of mass media in Turkana County where the Turkana community are based on. It is clear that, the evolution began in 1972 when KBC Eastern service allocated few hours to broadcast in Turkana dialect. This was followed by the establishment of the indigenous media stations in 2008 when the first Turkana radio station-Maata FM was established through the help of Trans world radio-Kenya in Lodwar. In 2009, Akicha FM was started by the Catholic Church in Lodwar. In 2010, Eki sil radio was born. This was through the efforts of International Organization for Migration. Another radio station-Ata Nayeche FM- was started by Nayanae-Emeyen youth group in 2012 in Kakuma. The last radio station was established in 2022-Ejok FM. It is the only radio station that has a bandwidth that covers the entire Turkana County unlike the preceding stations that are limited to certain radius as far as coverage is concerned. Also, in 2022, the first indigenous digital-youtube televisions were established in Lodwar town. These TV stations include; Chocha/Turkana TV and Ayok TV.

Therefore the study discovered that, mass media had sporadically grown in Turkana community, where by there were about six community radio stations, three print media(newspapers) in the county, two YouTube Television channels purely in Turkana dialect among other social media platforms that were in

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62. Mirian Naspaan, (2014). *Op. Cit*, p. 3.

63. *Ibid*.

64. *Ibid*.

operational in Turkana community of Turkana County. It was also established by the study that indeed, with the evolution of numerous radios and television, civilization had started getting to the people of this community. This is because, it emerged that people are getting teachings on politics, and socio-economic developments like other communities that have gone a big milestone in developments in Kenya such as the Agikuyu, Kalenjin, Luo and probably the Luyia community of Western Kenya. This study also concluded that through the use of mother tongue in community mass media, the cultural growth of the Turkana community will continue blossoming. The community culture will be preserved well and its continuity will be achieved. This will foresee the coming generation holding to the community's growth and maintenance of its customs, traditions and taboos at all times. More importantly to this study is the fact that, indigenous mass media restores dignity of a community as indeed the Turkana community.

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