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Radio and Social Media as A Two-Way Communication Tool in Conflict- and Pandemic-Affected Communities in Burkina Faso

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ABSTRACT

The article draws on the concepts of "felt needs" and "politics of listening" widely used in community development and applies them more broadly to the humanitarian crisis suffered by internally displaced persons in Burkina Faso. It investigates the two-way communication stream between radio journalists and listeners drawing on feedback collected remotely from 153 representatives of internally displaced and host communities in Burkina Faso during COVID-19. It argues that while a voice must be given to marginalised communities, it must also be listened to and acted upon. Rather than radio journalism being a loudspeaker for top-down messaging, the study argues that alternative approaches should be adopted in conflict- and pandemic-affected areas. It finds that a balance is needed between the information that listeners feel they need in their new extreme circumstances and the information that radio journalists, drawing on their expertise, feel would be strategically empowering.

Introduction

"Felt needs" (Bradshaw 1972) is a widely used concept in community development. This article applies it more broadly to radio journalism and marginalised communities in Africa by discussing with internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Burkina Faso, radio information they receive, feel they are lacking, or might require in the future. Felt needs goes beyond the basic concept of "need", which means requiring something essential or important rather than just desirable, which, here, may be shelter, food, or water. Instead, it acknowledges individuals' desires, feelings, or emotions about something that is lacking in their, or their community's, lives. The article draws on the concepts of "*felt needs*" and "*politics of listening*" (Dreher 2009), arguing that while a voice must be given to marginalised communities, this voice must be listened to and acted upon. It

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highlights the complexity of balancing audience feedback and journalistic information. Audiences cannot simply be given information without their emotions, needs, and reactions being considered. A "listening bridge" must therefore be built between listeners' felt needs for information and the objective aspirations of information providers (Pantti 2010: 169). As Dreher (2009: 450) states, "a politics of listening does not simply allow another to speak, but rather foregrounds interaction, exchange and interdependence". The article investigates how radio journalism, through active listening and modifications to format and structure, can address IDPs' needs for better information, greater inclusion, and reduced uncertainty and stigmatisation.

Despite information being available from humanitarian agencies, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), clinics, social and other media, radio journalism is the main source of accurate, accessible, and credible information in Burkina Faso (Yaméogo and Heywood 2022). Radio can tailor messages to local communities and be accessible to audiences through specific programming, timing, reach, and use of national languages (Batwala et al. 2012). The methodology, detailed below, used WhatsApp to gain remote feedback from radio listeners in isolated IDP and host communities in three regions in Burkina Faso (Kaya, Pissila, and Kongoussi) on their information needs in extreme circumstances, exacerbated by COVID-19. From mid-2020 to early-2021, feedback was combined with a content analysis of factual IDP-targeted broadcasts and provided in a continuous loop to radio journalists to enable programming to be adapted where appropriate (see Figure 1). The study collaborated with Studio Yafa,[1] a radio studio based in the capital, Ouagadougou.

The article provides an overview of the context and literature, then discusses the study's methodology. It then investigates the IDPs' expressed felt needs for information and the extent to which journalists' active listening addresses these needs. It questions whether participatory opportunities for communities in the broadcast design are increased, along with a shift away from top-down imposition of assumed information needs.

Burkina Faso, IDPs, and radio

Burkina Faso, one of the world's poorest countries (UNDP 2020), is predominantly rural and agricultural, and the combination of poverty, climate change, inter-community tension, armed conflict, food insecurity, and poor governance has exacerbated the deteriorating security situation. The security threat is spreading rapidly "because of real weaknesses in Sahelian governments, which can be portrayed as negligent at best and abusive at worst […]. And there is a sense of widespread impunity for abuse, injustice and corruption" (Shurkin 2022: 2). IDPs, fleeing their homes to seek safety, totalled 1,074,993 in December 2020, or a 92 per cent increase against the previous December (Reliefweb 2021). The majority are children and women. In addition are the 20,000 Malian refugees that Burkina Faso has hosted since 2012 following the uprising there (Beogo et al. 2018; UNHCR 2020). These migrant communities face immense challenges such as lack of food, shelter, water, sanitation, school closures, and gender-based violence, all worsened by COVID-19. Further, provision of aid to IDP communities has been severely hampered by

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the violence and COVID-19. Funding has steadily decreased, and humanitarian agencies have reduced access to affected communities as they themselves are directly threatened and face government restrictions on movement and vehicles (Murphy 2020).

The Sahel's deteriorating security situation is discussed in academic (Harmon 2015; Murphy 2020; Thurston 2020) and grey literature (see International Crisis Group,[2] DCAF,[3] ACLED,[4] among others). Extremist violence has been attributed to three main groups: Islamic State in the Greater Sahel, Group for the Support of Islam and Muslims, and Ansarouls Islam. There are also self-defence militia groups (Leclercq and Matagne 2020), and government and international forces. In January 2020, the government introduced laws to train and arm civilian volunteers to fight jihadist groups (Mednick 2020), but the weapons were not delivered and the volunteers became both perpetrators and victims of violence. The displaced communities are therefore trapped between jihadists, self-defence groups, and state military, all of whom have committed atrocities and furthered internal displacement (Mednick 2020).

COVID-19 was first recorded in Burkina Faso on 9 March 2020. By February 2021, the end of this study's analysis period, COVID-19 cases totalled 12,030, taking the number of deaths to 144 (IMMAP 2021). When the government's restrictive COVID-19 measures are combined with the country's crises, the pandemic's impact has been significant, particularly for IDPs. The government provided COVID-19 information through daily updates and regular situation reports by the Centre des Opérations de Réponse aux Urgences Sanitaires (CORUS). Information was retransmitted via radio and television throughout the country. Humanitarian agencies' awareness-raising efforts using social media were undermined by the country's poor internet penetration (only 25.7 per cent in January 2021; Datareportal 2020), leaving radio as the main source of information. Disinformation and rumours concerning COVID-19 were widespread, creating fear among populations and lack of adherence to safety guidelines. Accurate, trustworthy information to debunk these rumours was essential.

Radio is considered the most "Africanised" medium (Tudesq 2003) and is the most developed and often the only source of information that many rural populations can access (Damome 2006). As elsewhere in Africa, oral communication and respect for the spoken word is prioritised in Burkina Faso in comparison with other means of communication. This underpins the ongoing popularity and status of radio within Burkina Faso, in addition to its widely acknowledged characteristics (Damome 2006; 2019) such as its portability, affordability, and ability to broadcast in national languages (Capitant 2008). This contrasts with computers or televisions, which are largely inaccessible to this population as they cannot afford either, or for computers, may not have the literacy or linguistics skills to operate one, or have insufficient electricity (only 5 per cent of rural communities have access to electricity;Moner-Girona et al. 2016). "Oralate societies" (Mushengyezi 2003: 108) predominantly have low literacy skills (Burkina Faso's literacy is 50.1 per cent for men and 32.7 per cent for women; UNESCO 2021) and low levels of technological development. However, orality does not suggest "pre-modernity or a lagging stage of development compared with the Digital North" (Royston 2021: 3). Radio can respond promptly to

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[2]https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/sahel/burkina-faso
[3]https://www.dcaf.ch/
[4]https://acleddata.com/about-acled/

IDPs' underserved felt needs for information and its usefulness in conflict- and pandemic-affected zones is evident. Moreover, it is effective in awareness-raising as part of health communication campaigns (Diddi, Kumble, and Shen 2021).

In Burkina Faso, there are 164 private and public radio stations. The 135 private radio stations comprise 40 faith-based stations, 51 community radio stations, 40 commercial, and four international stations (Lamizana 2018). INGO radio studios programmes also broadcast information and awareness campaigns. One of these is Studio Yafa,[5] established and run by the Swiss-based media development organisation Fondation Hirondelle,[6] and whose radio journalism is analysed here. Dedicated to Burkinabè youth, it broadcasts short daily information programmes in multiple national languages on the country's social and political life. Studio Yafa also impacts perceptions of radio as an "Africanised" medium, being funded by western donors and subject to ideological constraints (Parks 2008). Nonetheless, it highlights its indigenous/exogenous structure as its journalism team is overwhelmingly Burkinabè, contributing to challenging top-down donor directives. The Studio does not broadcast directly to audiences, but via 37 partners, mostly community radios nationwide, that retransmit programmes using their own FM networks. Despite its importance, radio, and particularly community radio, is a victim of (Yaméogo 2018) and a response to the humanitarian crisis through the information, education, and appeal programmes it broadcasts to affected communities and to promote peaceful coexistence between them and host communities (Yaméogo 2022).

In May 2020, with UNHCR, Studio Yafa began producing short daily news programmes (analysed here) for IDPs and host communities, broadcast by nine partner radio stations in the regions with the highest IDP populations. However, extreme poverty and displacement resulted in many IDPs not having access to mobile phones or radio sets. Therefore, Studio Yafa distributed solar-powered radios in the country's northern region, which hosts 46.1 per cent of the country's IDP population, to extend its reach among these communities (CDAC 2020).

Felt needs and active listening

As stated above, felt needs are emotional, demand-based and reflect an individual's perceptions of their own needs and their inclusion and consultation can result in development or other programmes feeling relevant, rather than imposing top-down choices (Bhattacharyya 2004). By identifying and expressing their felt needs, individuals or communities become aware they have the capability to confront deficiencies in their own lives. While many projects, or broadcasts here, are provided by external sources, if individuals (listeners) can express their (felt) needs and be listened to, they gain ownership of the project and greater value is derived from it. Successful implementation of projects can be measured by positive impacts on those felt needs and whether they have been adequately addressed, accepted, and implemented.

Felt needs can be material—for example, shelter, electricity generators, or clinics—or non-material, non-physical items, such as democracy, justice, security, peace, and

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[5]https://www.studioyafa.org/
[6]https://www.hirondelle.org/en/

information (Makinde and Olabode 2019). Both categories (material and non-material) apply to the IDPs discussed here. Radio information (not radio sets, for example) is classed as a non-material felt need as it is does not have physical properties but, if correctly addressed, can have a significant impact on IDPs' emotions and can facilitate improvements in their lives. Within material/non-material categories, felt needs can also be intrinsic or extrinsic (Onyenemezu and Olumati 2013; Onyeozu 2007). "Intrinsic" needs are desires originating within individuals who want to achieve certain goals, and without such motivation a felt need will not even be expressed. According to Onyeozu (2007: 157), "it is only intrinsic felt-needs that brings about positive motivation and participation in community development". "Extrinsic" felt needs are the opposite and are when an outside entity persuades individuals about an idea who accept it. This article unites intrinsic and extrinsic needs and discusses tensions with the "intrinsic" versus "external" dichotomy and whether, if there are "felt" needs, are there "unfelt" needs. It discusses how radio journalism persuades listeners of the need for specific information which the listener accepts, possibly because it is one of only a few sources of information, or simply because the listeners were not aware they needed that information. As Hendy states regarding broadcasting, "most people do not know what they need, they also often do not know it exists" (2013: 23). The article also analyses the results of the study's design, which allows listeners to express their intrinsic needs for improvements in the information provided by radio to which the studio can respond, allowing both "felt" and "unfelt" needs to be addressed.

Individuals must be consulted about their felt needs so that they can be identified and prioritised at the design stage of development, or radio programmes (Onyenemezu and Olumati 2013). However, the way individuals are consulted has been questioned. Quantitative approaches can be restrictive, obtaining responses to pre-determined questions which developers, or journalists in this case, consider relevant. Individuals' perceptions and responses to what is possible may also be limited by social norms, cultures, and past experiences. Such surveys are based on knowledge and satisfaction of past experiences but should include "life world" perspectives and greater critical analysis (Bitterman 2005: 26). Wade (1989: 116) reinforces this, stating a more forward-thinking approach is needed focusing on "anticipatory needs" or a "present-to-future orientation". This would increase participatory opportunities for communities in the broadcast design, shifting away from top-down imposition of supposed or assumed needs.

Therefore, the study's methodology obtains qualitative data about information needs, allowing individuals to discuss situations and reveal needs that do not emerge from closed quantitative questions. Past (known) experiences are examined, and the qualitative approach provides insights into future needs. In other words, listeners could suggest what radio content they want (their intrinsic need), and this could be deduced from the qualitative responses, but because they are not experts in radio journalism, they could not suggest the best methods of receiving that information (sketch, debates, testimonies, etc.). Therefore, balancing listeners' felt needs with radio journalists' expertise is needed to optimise change, transfer information, and raise awareness. Journalists must also induce "unfelt" needs for information from listeners. Asking for listener feedback based on direct lived experiences and future needs means that programmes can be tailored accordingly, problems can be identified and prioritised, and broadcasts can be designed to address the most pressing of these.

Yet, for radio journalism to address these needs, and rather than it being used as a one-way route of communication, the voices of these marginalised communities must be listened to and acted upon, and a listening framework must be adopted. Wasserman (2020) applies ethics of listening to conflict and peace, but the concept of media actively listening to communities is relevant in broader broadcasting contexts. Radio must engage in a relationship with its listeners rather than maintaining professional detachment, resulting in dialogic listening, allowing the IDPs the right to speak, be listened to and have their feedback acted upon. It would be futile to ask for marginalised communities' voices to be expressed if they are then not listened to. Active listening is also "well-suited to communication environments marked by inequality, conflict, and cultural diversity" (Bickford 1996: 14), aptly describing the context in Burkina Faso. Yet, "listening" goes beyond merely asking for IDP feedback, often contributing to research fatigue, and signifies inclusion, attention, and responses (Dreher 2009). Without "listening", voice is "given" as the minimum standard and the participatory method that we seek here would "turn out to constitute 'top-down participation', where participation constitutes 'insiders' learning what 'outsiders' want to hear" (Tacchi 2009: 170). Often voices are given but do not appear to matter (Couldry 2010). To contribute to promoting a socially inclusive and cohesive society in Burkina Faso, listening must become an integral part of communication. Because radio is the main communication tool in Burkina Faso, and if IDPs' feedback is actively listened to, they can contribute to discussions on their condition and their changing environment, promoting inclusion and challenging stigmatisation. A strong symbiotic relationship can therefore be identified between felt needs and active listening because "how we listen shapes the ways in which others can speak and be heard" (Dreher 2009: 448).

Methodology

The study, conducted between June 2020 and January 2021, used a mixed-method approach combining thematic analysis of publicly available radio broadcasts and analyses of audience feedback collected using WhatsApp (for details see Heywood et al. 2022). This produced qualitative and quantitative data sets, which were then compared. The study began after the pandemic started, therefore, respondents had existing knowledge about the virus.

(A) Content analysis: the broadcasts

The content analysis comprised approximately 170 radio programmes broadcast between June 2020 and January 2021 by Studio Yafa. Four categories of COVID-19-related programmes were broadcast in four languages: Dioula, Mooré, Fulfuldé, and French. Three programmes targeted IDPs and were produced by Studio Yafa in collaboration with UNHCR: *Parlons Coronavirus* (17.18 h) was an 8-minute awareness-raising programme broadcast five times weekly with discussions with Dr Niaoné, the regular doctor, and IDPs' testimonies; the weekly, 5-minute *Fact Checking* programme, produced with *Faso-Check*,[7] a fact-checking platform for Burkinabe youth journalists and bloggers (3.07 h),
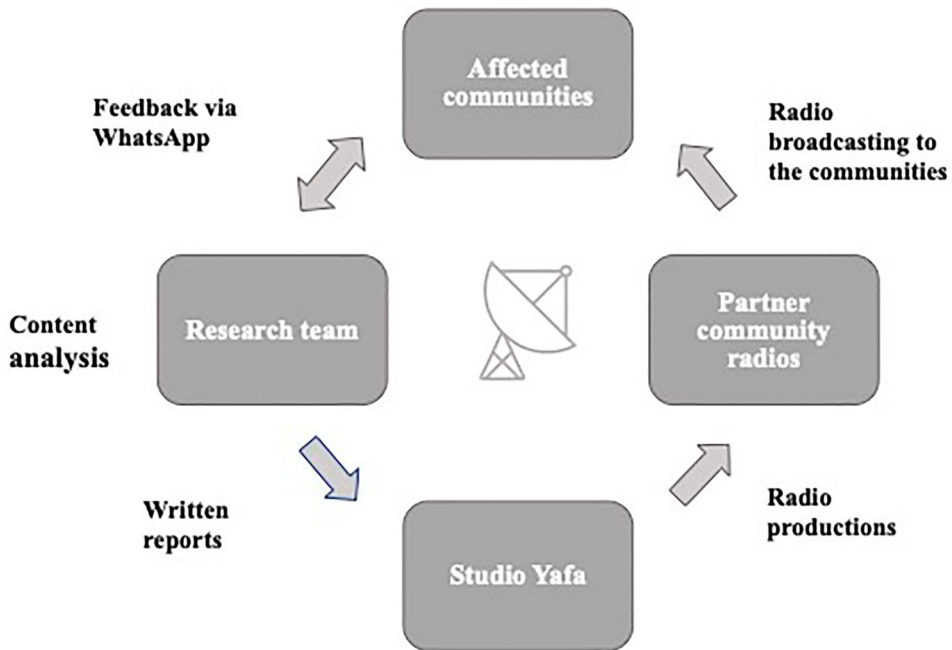

Figure 1. The multi-flow communication process.

discussed identifying COVID-19-related fake news; and the weekly 7-minute *Covid Reem* (3.36 h), with artists or celebrities discussed COVID-19 with light-hearted awareness-raising sketches with two characters providing suggestions to IDPs on managing the crisis. A fourth 2–3-minute programme, *Covid-19 info*, targeting the whole population, is broadcast three times weekly (00.13 h). All the broadcasts were coded and analysed by multilingual research assistants in Ouagadougou according to their primary and secondary theme, target audience, journalistic content (possible rumours and misinformation), representations of themes and perceptions by those in the broadcasts, news source, number of (opposing) points of view, and profiles of those in the programmes (IDPs, host communities, men/women, young/elderly people).

(B) Feedback analysis

Two sets of listeners were recruited: a first group who responded to baseline and endline questions at the project's start and end to identify changes in COVID-related perceptions or behaviour, and a second group who collected responses from their communities over several weeks between the baseline and endline. The responses formed part of the overall feedback to Studio Yafa and used a participatory approach involving radio journalists, listeners, and researchers, each having input into the radio broadcasts (see Figure 1). The first group of listeners comprised 90 recruits, including 70 IDPs and 20 host community representatives, from Kaya, Pissila, and Kongoussi. These sites were chosen because they are located in the region with the highest IDP population: 467,738 IDPs (38.4 per cent of the country's IDPs) on 30 April 2021 (CONASUR 2020). The second group comprised 63 recruits from IDP and host communities at the three sites. Participants were

recruited by a local research centre according to gender and marital status and were equally distributed among villages. All respondents were given android phones and phone credit and were reimbursed for their time. In the baseline and endline, the participants were asked about their levels of interest in COVID-19 information, how they wanted to receive that information (genre, sources), and whether they could trust it; who were most vulnerable in their communities; what their main concerns were; and which areas of their lives had been most affected by COVID-19. In the endline, the participants were also asked about the vaccine. The second group were asked to collect COVID-19-related information they had heard that week and its source; what they had heard about health centres and health workers, vaccines, social cohesion, and stigma attached to those affected by COVID-19; returning home; influence of opinion leaders; and secondary consequences of COVID-19.

The questions

Questions were delivered and responses were collected using WhatsApp (Heywood et al 2022; Ullrich 2018). This has the advantage of reaching populations in conflict- and pandemic-affected areas without requiring in-person interviews. It also offers a voice messaging facility, allowing messages to be sent and received orally, and quickly and privately, in addition to text messages. Those with low literacy skills could therefore participate.

For the baseline and endline, four questions were delivered on four days in national languages and French. Participants had the option of responding by text or voice message, and in their preferred language. The questions were (a) closed, multiple-choice-type questions to obtain quantitative data and (b) open questions to obtain qualitative data. On average there were two closed and two open questions per day. The questions were back-translated (or translated back into their original language) to ensure linguistically and culturally accurate translations. WhatsApp broadcast lists[8] were used to send the questions. They enable bulk quantities of messages to be sent (up to 256) and, unlike group chat messages, respondents reply directly to the sender and are not party to others' responses, thus giving them privacy to speak without the influence of group members. Respondents' answers were translated into French from national languages where necessary. The local research assistants uploaded the responses to a password-protected Google Drive for analysis. All participants gave their written or oral consent to participate in the study and were anonymised using codes throughout the process.[9]

The second group of recruits were tasked with reporting COVID-19-related information, via WhatsApp, to the local research team, circulating among communities and in public places (markets, bars, tea bars, clinics). They were contacted weekly by the research assistants on themes mentioned above. They could receive and respond via text and voice messages and using their preferred language.

The broadcasts and the feedback were analysed fortnightly and the research team submitted approximately 15 written reports on the baseline, endline and data collection to Studio Yafa allowing it to adjust the radio production where appropriate. University

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[8]https://faq.whatsapp.com/270531410749732/?locale=en_US
[9]Respondents were coded (Part—Participant; CH—host community; Coll—collector; PDI—IDP; followed by a number (e.g., Part_PDI_32).

ethics approval was obtained following consideration of the method, giving mobiles, and working with the recruitment research centre. By analysing the study's design process and results the article addresses the following:

R1 What were listeners' expressed felt needs regarding radio information?

R2 Were these felt needs listened to, and acted upon, by the radio output, and if so, how?

R3 To what extent did the listening practices of the radio studio team facilitate the balancing act between its own expertise and the listeners' felt needs for information?

Findings

Media accessibility

A basic non-material felt need expressed by the respondents was for information which, once received, would be shared with others, extending its reach. Radio journalism has prompted the emergence of spontaneous public spheres in IDP communities. It has become both a social and sociable medium through collective listening and informal information sharing between direct listeners (those who listen to radio programmes) and indirect listeners (those who do not). This elasticity of the audience strengthened both social ties and community resilience to COVID-19. Respondents said they shared information spontaneously with family; 33 per cent shared it with neighbours, 33 per cent with friends, and 8 per cent with those at work. The accuracy and relevance of the initial radio information is therefore significant given its ripple effect and its reinterpretation as it is passed on. Statistics on radio stations' reach and on those who state they use radio as their primary source of information are therefore inherently understated.

Nonetheless, 76 per cent of respondents said that radio met their information needs, particularly regarding COVID-19, and 87 per cent considered radio to be their most trusted information source. Radio, being cheap and portable, was vital to the respondents and suitable to these communities in Burkina Faso who have low literacy skills but need information clearly, quickly, and accessibly. Eighty-six per cent owned means to receive radio journalism, be it mobiles or radio sets. Television was not accessible to many IDPs because of insufficient electricity at accommodation sites and its cost when available, or because programmes were linguistically inaccessible, and only 8 per cent used it as their main source of information. Social media, accessed only by 2 million of Burkina Faso's 21 million population (Datareportal 2020), was not widely used by those questioned (3 per cent). On one hand, this removed a potentially important source of information from IDPs, but on the other, shielded them from what they considered to be a main source of rumour and misinformation, i.e. social media. One challenge among listeners was physical and linguistic access to information. Studio Yafa addressed the material accessibility to radio through collective listening and by providing solar radios (CDAC 2020). Programmes were community-based and required community participation; they were recorded or produced in the studio and at host sites, making IDPs both receivers and co-producers of content. The Studio responded to non-material linguistic demands by broadcasting different programme types in the country's three dominant national languages (Mooré, Dioula, and Fulfuldé) and in French, the official language, at regular times during the week. Listening routines were thus created, attracting

broader audiences than had one programme type been broadcast. Memorable jingles introduced the broadcasts. Studio Yafa's active listening at this initial stage reinforced the listener/radio relationship.

Media genres and content

The respondents' information needs changed over time and needed consideration from Studio Yafa to reinforce active listening practices, or a "conscious reorientation of the media toward voices that are suppressed or marginalized, [asking] for the media to engage in relationships rather than detachment" (Wasserman 2020: 136). By the endline, the respondents' principal concern was the security situation in the country (67 per cent), contrasting with 39 per cent at the baseline. This was followed by information about COVID-19 (12 per cent), food shortages (8 per cent) and finances, access to water, schooling, and other general issues. Sixty per cent considered that journalists focused overly on COVID-19 and levels of bitterness emerged, highlighting IDPs' feelings that they had been side-lined and their needs were no longer relevant. Respondents also expressed felt needs for information on topics they considered important for the future which reflected a resignation to the more permanent nature of their displacement (information on training, starting small businesses to aid their survival, better access to education), the possibility of returning home, and scientific developments (the vaccine). Respondents also detailed which radio genre they preferred: news programmes (32 per cent), interactive programmes (24 per cent), sketches (14 per cent), music (10 per cent), multilingual programmes (8 per cent), debates (6 per cent), and testimonials (6 per cent). Despite providing such responses, listeners did not link the information they received to how they received it. They did not associate the genre with a gap in their needs. While radio could not ignore information about COVID-19 because it was not the listeners' top priority, radio journalists, using various strategies to appeal to listeners' emotions and provide credible and evidence-based material, "imposed" this topic on them. They thus balanced the felt needs of communities with other, seemingly less important, "unfelt" needs (COVID-19, in this case, considered of paramount importance globally).

The discussion programme, *Parlons Coronavirus*, secured levels of gravity and factual accuracy through regular guest, Dr Niaoné, a Burkinabè doctor, aligning with respondents' statements about their respect for health workers as information sources. Appealing to individual's emotions and the importance of individual responsibility, complex information in broadcasts was systematically linked to the IDPs' lives and presented from an IDP perspective. For example, programmes discussed the most vulnerable in IDP communities, catch-up classes for exam-age school pupils, previous health campaigns such as HIV/AIDs and malaria, thus drawing on IDPs' lived experiences to trigger audience recall of news (Mujica and Bachmann 2018: 187) and highlight "unfelt" needs among listeners (i.e. information they did not know they needed). They also broadcast testimonies from IDPs. Testimonies are effective in improving message retention among listeners (Heywood 2020) and highlight the affective power of media, as stories which focus on individuals' experiences can result in heightened emotional responses and reactions. Studio Yafa responded to audience feedback and their need for inclusion within information and within the population by producing 10 broadcasts in which journalists and

Dr Niaoné answered IDPs' questions *in situ*, thus personalising programmes. Testimonies were also broadcast providing specific examples of IDPs who had succeeded in creating small businesses, addressing needs for relevant information on topics considered important for their futures. Thus, by consulting the IDPs, the study's design contributed to the broadcasts gaining relevance (Bhattacharyya 2004), and to the listeners becoming aware that they could confront deficiencies in their own lives.

Additionally, relying on the affective power of radio, Studio Yafa's awareness-raising broadcasts were reinforced by short, animated sketches. Two friends—Momo and Nafou—discuss themes, make suggestions, and offer strategies to IDPs to deal with the crisis and information about the crisis, including rumours. In *FasoCheck* on 25 December 2020, they discussed precautions to avoid spreading false information; on 17 July 2020, they advised being careful with information reported via WhatsApp; and on 7 August 2020, Momo said he would not share information that he considered untrue. Using sketches draws on entertainment–education theories, widely and effectively used to disseminate health information in the Global South (Brown and Singhal 1999). By embedding health messages in broadcast narratives, radio can trigger behavioural changes (Singhal et al. 2003) and can increase knowledge among individuals who then transfer it to relatives through discussion and deliberation. In turn, this leads to behaviour change at society level (Diddi, Kumble, and Shen 2021) and encourages listeners, who identify with the characters, to replicate the recommended behaviour (Bandura 1997). Like other programmes, the sketches covered many topics as the virus and its treatment developed. These went from general discussions on the difficulties of not shaking hands, the need to wash hands, and avoid touching one's face in August 2020, to arguments between the two characters when Nafou wanted to continue sharing utensils[10] with friends but Mamo stressed she must wash them properly first, and other topics including avoiding COVID-19 during Harmattan, and statements incorporated into the narrative about free hospital care. When Nafou's sister falls ill with COVID-19, Mamo advises her to call 35–35 (the COVID-19 line) and gives her other advice, and indirectly to the listeners.

While it is true that radio is not "the point of origin or cause of 'effects', but simply a vector in a larger process" (Gibbs 2002: 340), the sketches' affective power surfaced from the feedback suggesting that Studio Yafa had actively listened to the IDPs' felt needs for information and in a manner that made the message identifiable and credible. Part_PDI_07 on Day 1 recalled the sketch's hygiene-raising information and on Day 2 (asked 8 days later), stated that she had implemented the advice:

> (Day 1): They're good in the theatre, they discussed lots of actions to avoid Corona, I remember well, they're funny. We learned lots with them; handwashing after the market, wearing masks, visiting neighbours, lots of things

> (Day 2): Did you apply any practical advice in your lives from the radio messages? We got advice from the radio theatre to wash our hands with soap, to wear masks and social distance, I always do it with my family.

A significant challenge when providing the information prioritised by the respondents was that rumours already circulated on those topics. While rumours must be understood within the context of orality, which forms an integral part of Burkinabè information

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[10]Many IDPs fled their homes without belongings and needed to share available equipment.

systems (Hahn and Kibora 2008), word-of-mouth is also a carrier of false information. Given their uncertainty, IDPs draw on rumours to give meaning to their situation and acquire some security and stability (Moulin 2010). IDPs, whether receiving or propagating rumours, can "create some sort of order" (Turner 2004: 237) in their new environment and exercise agency by participating in the social construction of reality, thus gaining a voice. While rumours among IDPs may result from lack of access to credible information sources creating "an alternative information economy of rumours and gossip" (McConnachie 2014: 53), they can work in parallel with official information and interact with it, meaning that radio faces an ongoing battle rather than one-off struggles.

Many of the rumours circulating among the respondents focused on information that was new to them, requiring clarification, rather than actual disinformation. Regarding COVID-19, rumours suggested that it is a rich person's illness, or that it is a cold or seasonal, or a government ruse, and that it can be cured. There were also rumours about possibilities of returning home, suggesting that rumours can stoke unrealistic expectations, While some respondents drew on multiple information sources (NGOs, health workers, associations) checking contents and comparing reports, others demonstrated an undifferentiated belief in radio: "there are no rumours; the information we have is from the radio" (Part_PDI_43); "on the radio, there are no rumours" (Part_CH_13), highlighting their vulnerability, especially if they cannot distinguish credible information from rumour.

Fact Checking, another discussion programme, debated COVID-19 information circulating on social media and online and compared it with scientific sources, including academic reports by scientists in the Global North (19 per cent), WHO (8 per cent), and Burkina Faso's CORUS (2 per cent). Traditional remedies were cited less frequently (5 per cent). African scientific sources, when they became available, were included in response to listeners' requests. The programme aimed to verify information and address rumours which, given that they circulate orally, were continually modified and reinterpreted (Jack 2018). For example, on 21 August 2020, the programme examined COVID-19's transmission through cigarette smoke. Other discussions included the effectiveness of meat against COVID-19 (30/10/2020) and chocolate (11/12/2021); dust as an agent for spreading the virus (20/11/2020,) particularly during Harmattan; herbal remedies (27/11/2020); and scientific issues such as the vaccine (18/12/2020). The discussions evolved to reflect developments in the pandemic: from transmission by mosquito bites, immunity among African populations; shaving beards as a form of protection; traditional medicine; and Africa being a vaccine test ground. To address information gaps and to avoid focusing just on COVID-19 given the respondents' expressed priorities, the communication flows created by this study combined with Studio Yafa's listening practices have since led to broadcasts targeting the social, economic, and psychological consequences of COVID-19 among IDPs.

Inclusion

The qualitative data highlighted feelings of alienation among IDPs and concerns about obtaining information about principal service providers (government, local authorities, humanitarian agencies, NGOs), whether this information could be regularly obtained given developments in the pandemic and security situation, and how these services would be administered. "[You should] know that our problems are multiple, these are

not real houses, the wood, the tarpaulins are ruined, the rain is coming soon, where will we sleep?" (Part_PDI_17). COVID-19 had exacerbated IDPs' reliance on others for material needs (shelter, education, food, grazing land, water), increasing their vulnerability: "the speed the disease is transmitted is frightening, and displaced people have nothing, we rely on others for everything. I'm pregnant, how can we cope, we've got too many problems" (Part_PDI_07). Education[11] was raised frequently among younger single women, aware their own education was suffering because of school closures and the impact on their futures, and among parents, with the lack of information triggering fear and speculation, leading to rumours: "When we arrived in Kongoussi with our children, the schools were closed, we've lost hope that our children will ever get work, it's a major concern for parents" (Part_PDI_14).

Respondents also wanted greater inclusion by journalists generally. For example, COVID-19 awareness-raising broadcasts did not sufficiently consider their material needs such as lack of access to water (MSF 2021), their inability to purchase items such as hand sanitisers, or even the humanitarian crisis. Access to food, a problem affecting the whole population (Zidouemba, Kinda, and Ouedraogo 2020) and particularly IDPs, was also regularly mentioned by respondents as a significant problem insufficiently covered. IDPs' perception of their exclusion from information broadcasts—their main connection to the outside world—negatively impacted on them and increased their sense of vulnerability and abandonment. An ethical dimension therefore emerged; if radio's affective power on IDPs is negative, it provides a further reason for journalists to adopt a listening approach to their audience and making their "voice matter" (Couldry 2010). Felt needs for information on certain topics are emotional as they go deeper than simply wanting information. In this case, IDPs wanted radio information that included more IDP voices as this could be used as a tool to stem their increasing feeling of isolation. Anxiety was also increased by insufficient information about care given to those with COVID-19; few people stated they knew someone who had contracted the virus and they had little information about what happens. Similarly, speculation was rife regarding the vaccine. While a "seeing is believing" approach is feasible on television as images can support messages, it is less straightforward on radio and different approaches, as discussed, such as testimonies, supporting evidence, credible sources, and guests, are needed.

Studio Yafa, established to target young people, broadcast youth and gender-inclusive IDP-focused programmes, addressing IDPs' concerns, and contributing to reducing feelings of alienation. While represented in Studio Yafa's regular broadcasts, the *Mini-Mag* and *Ya'Debat*, young people also featured in the COVID-19 programmes and particularly in *Covid Reem*. Artists and musicians, such as Nathanael Minoungou, who is "engaged in promoting human values" and "the fight against extremism, violence and terrorism" (*Covid Reem*, 13/09/2020), are presented as young leaders to be emulated. Other artists such as Osabi Johann (4/10/2020), Audry (27/12/2020), and Patrick Kabré (11/01/2021) highlight the role of youth and make them responsible for raising awareness among parents and villages. Similarly, gender issues among IDPs are promoted in COVID-19 programmes. These questioned traditional responsibilities of men and women among IDPs given the new COVID-19-related circumstances and whether accepted decision-making

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[11]In February 2021, 2,208 schools remained closed, affecting 314,486 students and 11,048 teachers (UNICEF May 2021).

roles should prevail, for example, about household hygiene, social distancing, or leaving the home. This is frequently debated by Momo, a man, and Nafou, a woman, in the sketches and represents the complex situation faced by households now headed by women, having fled alone following atrocities inflicted on male relatives. Traditional structures within this patriarchal society have therefore been shaken by displacement, yet the new roles and responsibilities are considered in programmes. By using the participatory approaches in this study and by actively listening to audiences in the information process, rather than to "giving a voice", top-down participation (Tacchi 2009) can be avoided.

Conclusion

This article investigated the need for radio journalists in Burkina Faso to actively listen to IDPs' and host communities' felt needs for information in order to promote greater inclusion and reduce uncertainty and stigmatisation among these populations. The study used a participatory approach bringing together academics, practitioners, and audiences. Future studies should include medical experts, authorities, and possibly donors. The innovative methodology also contributed by creating a two-way communication tool to take the felt information needs of listeners in extreme conditions into account as part of the production process, and to act on these needs.

The article drew on and reaffirmed the concepts of "*felt needs*" and "*politics of listening*" (Dreher 2009; Onyenemezu and Olumati 2013; Onyeozu 2007), widely used in community development, and applied them more broadly to the humanitarian crisis suffered by IDPs in Burkina Faso. It argued, in this new context, that while a voice must be given to marginalised communities, it must also be listened to and acted upon. As Ward and Wasserman (2015: 837) state, "having a voice and speaking out is nullified if nobody listens". Information, as a non-material felt need, proved vital to these communities as they faced uncertainty in new and unknown environments and radio journalism was the main, and most trusted, source of that information. Shaping that communicative tool using the methodology's deliberative loop proved beneficial to the IDPs as they recognised their voice was being heard, and acted upon, reducing their feelings of alienation and confirming that active listening is "well-suited to communication environments marked by inequality, conflict, and cultural diversity" (Bickford 1996: 14). Thus, the audiences were able to influence the very programmes designed for them. However, this impacts concepts of "audience" as they are no longer passive recipients but rather involved in two-way communication with new forms of engagement, through the listener/radio interaction, resulting in the audience feeling less isolated and with increased agency.

Certain limitations emerged. While regular reports analysing the ongoing feedback and content analysis were provided to the studio by the research team, a greater response—or more active listening—from journalists would have strengthened the outcomes. Journalists must be given time to read accessible feedback reports and must also be involved in the project design to promote ownership and allow listening practices to be developed. Additionally, concerning WhatsApp, many respondents were not digitally literate and therefore had difficulties working the app. They also encountered internet connectivity issues, and sometimes used the mobile credit in advance for their own purposes. The effects of giving mobile phones to IDPs and host communities must also be considered. One respondent commented that she felt she had acquired greater status within her

community, but did it also have a negative effect? Given that information and disinformation travel together, did the study increase the exposure of the participants to disinformation by giving them mobile phones? While this is hard to determine retrospectively, it should be considered for future projects.

Studio Yafa, the radio studio analysed here, adopted several strategies to respond to the listeners' expressed needs. They broadcast a range of IDP-focused programmes that were youth- and gender-inclusive in different formats (discussions, news programmes, sketches, etc.) and in national languages. They presented IDPs positively both as a topic and as individuals in programmes, for example, through testimonies, and through listener participation. Studio Yafa thus made their information more inclusive, interesting, and relevant (Bhattacharyya 2004), and did not portray IDPs as a "problem to be resolved". To counter rumours, they broadcast evidence-based information with references to international and national scientific sources and regular appearances by a local Burkinabè doctor and other credible guests. The broadcasts analysed here can therefore be seen as evidence of some institutional "listening" by Studio Yafa to listeners' feedback.

Burkina Faso's IDPs continue to face extensive challenges, exacerbated by COVID-19. Having information is essential. By participating in the study, IDPs and their host communities expressed information needs that were specific to their circumstances and gained a voice as a result. Yet it was only by balancing the intrinsic (non-material) felt needs of IDPs with the extrinsic provision from the radio studio that these needs could be met. By balancing the knowledge and experience of IDP listeners and local radio journalists, a shift away from a top-down imposition of supported or assumed information needs can be achieved, and change, information transfer and awareness raising can be optimised.

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