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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Section One: The Role of Radio

The book examines the significant role played by radio in empowering women in three West African countries: Mali, Niger, and Burkina Faso. The choice of these three countries enables a fair comparison: all three face similar social, economic and political problems, share similar religious, traditional and cultural backgrounds and, most importantly for this book, all suffer from similar, particularly high levels of gender inequality. Geographically, they border one another and are all subject to conflict and a deteriorating security situation. These problems, compounded by COVID-19, have had a serious impact on women, many of whom will have become heads of households because of their husband's seasonal labour migration or because of conflict and the deaths of their husbands and male relatives. Radio is the most important source of information in the three countries as limited electricity, little internet, extreme poverty, and low literacy rates render other sources inaccessible to many, despite the emergence of social media. The three countries have French as their official language, but it is spoken by only a very small minority of the population, in contrast to the multiple national languages. Research into this topic area and francophone West Africa is limited in anglophone academic literature, and therefore, this book contributes to filling that gap.

The book is based on five years of research conducted in Mali, Niger, and Burkina Faso investigating and assessing the impact of the work of

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Fondation Hirondelle, the Swiss-based media development organisation. That the book covers such a lengthy period, encompassing so many upheavals, allows some of the more recent difficulties experienced by women to be better acknowledged and understood.

The book discusses the output of one Fondation Hirondelle radio studio in each country, each funded by international development organisations or corporations and each broadcasting nationwide from their country's respective capitals. The three studios were purposively sampled to represent different stages of radio growth within the overarching organisation, allowing development and experience to be considered. Studio Tamani in Mali is the largest and 'most stable' of the three. It started in 2013 and has 85 partner radios throughout the country (in 2022), reaching 80% of the population; Studio Kalangou in Niger started broadcasting in January 2016 and has 52 partner radios (in 2022), reaching 60% of the population; and Studio Yafa in Burkina Faso is new, having started in 2019, with 37 radio partners in 2022 (there are no figures yet available for its reach). Each broadcasts in French and national languages on similar themes but for differing amounts of time reflecting their stages of development (Studio Tamani—3.15 hours daily each week; Studio Kalangou—2 hours daily each week; and Studio Yafa—approximately 40 minutes daily each week). They were all created by the Swiss-based media development organisation Fondation Hirondelle. All are run locally with local editors-in-chief and local journalists and produce general news and information programmes in the form of debates, news programmes and short magazine programmes. Rather than broadcasting directly to audiences, each studio broadcasts to partner radios throughout their countries, which then use their FM networks to transmit the programmes to their communities, enabling local populations to access the information via FM radio sets or phones, connected, or not, to networks. This partnership with community radios, or proximity radios, is important because it provides the opportunity for the studios to connect with listeners and maintain proximity with their audiences, thus cultivating trust.

Radio plays an empowering role through the content it broadcasts, the manner in which it broadcasts (formats and platforms) and the choice of who is involved in the broadcasting, such as producers, editors, presenters, or guests. If women are portrayed in non-stereotypical ways and are included in the production and output of broadcasts, radio can influence how women perceive topics, how they perceive themselves and, importantly, how society perceives them. Yet radio programmes have to be

carefully crafted to ensure that the information and any empowering messages that are broadcast align with the needs and requirements of the audience, are broadcast at convenient times, are accessible to listeners and are in languages the listeners can understand. This book discusses the cultural identities and social constructs that shape radio broadcasting and influence its impact on women's empowerment.

Radio is an ordinary tool. It is simple to use and widely dismissed in our digital age. However, by bringing together the ordinariness and accessibility of radio and the power that it has as an information provider or knowledge resource (Heywood, 2020a) with the everyday lives of women, significant life changes can be triggered. Radio's pervasiveness and ability to be relevant to all levels of society, all walks of life and technologies, linking vast geographical areas, enable it to remain the medium of choice in many sub-Saharan countries (Damome, 2006, 2019) with a complex societal value (Gunner et al., 2011). Given the vast technological changes that have occurred over recent years, it could be thought that radio was a dying medium, waiting only to be replaced by online means of communication (Heywood et al., 2023). However, to many, especially following extensive media deregulation in many African countries in the 1990s, radio has reinforced its position as an emerging public sphere. It brings communities together, enabling them to gain an otherwise unheard voice, challenging those in authority. Radio has multiple roles, including peacebuilding, strategic communication, media development, commercial, state, religious, and community building. All of these, as alternative media or not, serve very different purposes yet also bring communities together, be they communities of interest or geographical communities.

Radio

Radio is an accessible and important broadcasting tool that, according to Tudesq, is the only medium that has been truly 'Africanised' (2003: 73), especially given its durability, portability, affordability, ease of use, adaptability to extreme conditions and its geographical reach, and its democratising ability to engage listeners through phone-ins and talk shows, allowing them to contribute and give feedback. In contemporary societies, radio plays the essential role of 'crossroads media' in that it 'links rural and urban, literate, and illiterate populations, French speakers, and speakers of national languages. However, radio also links different types of media' (Capitant, 2008: 209). It can be accessed via various platforms, including

mobile phones (Chuma, 2013; Gilberds & Myers, 2012; Nassanga et al., 2013; Sullivan, 2011), solar-powered radios, and loudspeakers, among others, allowing urban and rural communities, including those with low literacy levels, to receive news and awareness-raising information.

Although used as a propaganda tool during colonial rule (Brennan, 2010; Gunner et al., 2011), radio has also represented alternative and disruptive voices and acts as a 'tool of resistance' (Hyden et al., 2002) by drawing on local cultures (Barnard, 2000) and the many national languages of the continent, overcoming literacy barriers while also competing with colonial languages (Power, 2000). The alternative platform that radio, be it commercial, local, or community, represents allows multiple voices to emerge through interactive programming. Alternative radio, which provides content that 'expresses alternative vision to hegemonic policies, priorities, and perspectives' (Downing, 2001: v), has played a political role in challenging state radio (Frère, 2008; Moyo, 2011) as a form of popular comment through 'pavement radio' or informal information relay networks (Ellis, 1989; Nyamnjoh, 2004; Wasserman, 2010) and as clandestine or pirate radio (Mabweazara, 2015; Moyo, 2010). Challenging messages from the mainstream media, this alternative role emerges strongly through community media, which have been widely discussed (Atton, 2001; Berrigan, 1979; Fraser & Estrada, 1998; Howley, 2005; Lennie & Tacchi, 2013; Myers, 2008), and particularly through community radio, whose practices, according to Rodriquez (2001), create a 'fissure in the global mediascape', allowing new forms of political agency to emerge and individual and collective identities to be produced (Ginsberg et al., 2002). Community or proximity radio, which will be discussed in Chap. 6, plays a key role with regard to the transformative power of alternative media (see, for example, Banda (2006) on South Africa). It brings together communities united by specific ideological or political purposes who feel marginalised by mainstream media but seek a representational voice. Generally run on a nonprofit basis for nonprofitable purposes (Fraser & Estrada, 2001), they have been defined as operating 'in the community, for the community, about the community and by the community' (Tabing, 2002: 11) with the ability to empower 'ordinary people to become active producers, rather than mere passive recipients, of information and opinion' (Gumucio-Dagron, 2001: 34). It is their programming and the manner in which listeners respond to it that can influence the formation and cohesion of social groups (Spitulnik, 1998) and thus have an empowering influence.

What is particularly relevant to the context in this book is that radio is widely considered to be an intimate medium (Douglas, 2004; Lovilglio, 2005; Shingler & Wieringa, 1998). This is advantageous to women listeners, as they can seek out information on sensitive topics such as rape, domestic violence, or health from radio, which may not be appropriate in mixed environments. They can then assimilate it and discuss it together with family or community members to organise and act for change (Heywood, 2020a). Because of this intimacy and the content devised for or by them, radio has been described as a 'female medium' (Mitchell, 2004). However, radio can also be a public medium. Characterised as a secondary medium and not requiring visual attention, meaning that listeners can be involved in other tasks simultaneously, radio can unite individuals by forming a sense of shared space in markets, refugee camps, compounds, workspaces, or gatherings, reinforcing Girard's (2003) research on radio as a medium of social cohesion. In the case of women, this can allow them to gather through listening associations (Heywood, 2020b; Heywood & Ivey, 2021a), which are 'small listening and discussion groups that meet regularly to receive a special radio program, which the members then discuss' (Rogers et al., 1997, cited in Manyozo, 2012: 29). These support networks used by women to receive, share, and discuss information are discussed in more detail in Chap. 6 to illustrate the empowering capacity of radio in local communities to democratise and to strengthen the public sphere (Agosta, 2001).

The significance of radio in West Africa cannot be understated, and although much of the information above is relevant to this region, it is important not to refer to 'Africa' homogenously, given the diversity of experiences across the continent, but to examine the chosen three countries and their realities separately.

Radio in Mali, Niger, and Burkina Faso

Radio in Mali

Radio received its main boost in many countries throughout Africa in the 1990s when technological and legislative changes allowed local media to broadcast freely and act as an alternative to the centralised information previously transmitted and symbolising a fight against a monopoly (Ba, 2019; Fardon & Furniss, 2000) that had been in place for more than three decades. Radio in Mali, prior to independence, broadcast information of

interest to Europeans in the country and was broadcast in French. The state colonial radio, Radio Soudan, began broadcasting in 1957 from Bamako, the capital, as an extension of Radio France d'Outre-mer, France's broadcasting network operating in France's overseas departments and territories. It became Radio Mali (Radio Nationale du Mali) following independence in 1960 aiming to consolidate the country's national unity (Traoré, 2007) but inherited many of the practices, policies, and staff of the colonial station, shaping its output. Programming remained in colonial French, which had the effect of continuing to exclude most of the country except the urban elite. Radio Mali expanded as a result of finance from the Chinese and then French governments in 1969 and 1970 (Diakon & Röschenthaler, 2017). It then became a radio and television station and was named Radiodiffusion Télévision du Mali (RTM) and then the Office de radiodiffusion et de télévision du Mali [Office of Radio and Television of Mali] (ORTM) in 1992. It was no longer under government control but was publicly financed. The Conseil Supérieur de la Communication (CSC) was created in 1992 as an independent regulatory body with the objective of advising the government on granting broadcast licences. It was replaced on 13 December 2013 by the Haute Autorité de la Communication (HAC), which is tasked with 'the regulation of the communication sector in the fields of audiovisual, written press, audiovisual and written advertising and the online press'. The HAC has greater powers than its predecessor: 'The High Authority, which is an independent body, also exercises its authority over all international and foreign media broadcast from a site located on the national territory, regardless of how they are made available to the public' (REFRAM, n.d). Like the CSC, the independence of the HAC has been questioned, as the government appoints the members of this regulatory body, and it also receives state subsidies.

Conferences on the liberalisation of the media were organised in many African countries, including the Conference on Radio Pluralism in Bamako, Mali, in 1993 (Leguy & Mitsch, 2007; Myers, 1998; Tudesq, 2003). Mali began witnessing a shift in its broadcasting from a state monopoly to media pluralism following the legalisation of private broadcasters and the emergence of 300 private radio stations (Myers, 2014; Schulz, 2001).[1] Its first non-state radio station, Radio Rurale de Kayes (RRK), had already been launched in 1988 with the support of an Italian

[1] However, over the years, Mali's image as a pioneer of the liberalisation of the media has faded, having experienced a sharp fall on the Press Freedom Index from 26th in 2010 to 122nd in 2014, rising slightly to 111 in 2022 (RSF, 2022).

NGO forming a chink in the state's monopolistic media armour, and it used an interventionist approach as part of the prevailing developmentalism. Radio Bamakan, and then Radio Liberté, were created in 1991 and formed part of the first group of radio stations to provide an alternative to the state ORTM, broadcasting in national languages (Myers, 1998, 2014). Multiple rural and urban radio stations were then set up by women's groups, religious organisations, NGOs and others, all seeking to counter centralised broadcasting, acting 'as the mouthpiece of the population in direct contrast to ORTM – the mouthpiece of the government' (Myers, 1998: 202). Many of the local radios were FM radios broadcasting within 50 km of their stations, thus reaching their immediate communities. They were set up with the support of NGOs or local associations and were financed by advertising, personal announcements and advertising.

The liberalisation of the media in Mali in the 1990s enabled radio, in particular, to significantly impact the lives of the population. It was extensively used as a nation-building tool (Englund, 2019) but also aimed to improve living conditions and increase the participation of rural and isolated communities, forming bridges between peoples. According to Mbodj-Pouye in her detailed account of RRK (2021: 3), 'radio would encourage the circulation of news between one locality and another and between migrants and their home villages. This in turn was seen as providing a new way to share experiences, and in particular development success stories'. Previously unable to understand broadcasts, listeners were suddenly able to receive information in a language they could understand on topics of interest to them. Radio programmes would cover farming, local conflicts, laws, and literacy and generally inform the population about codes, laws and procedures in the country affecting them in various formats (mini-dramas, discussions, spots). Gender was integrated into programmes as local radio gained popularity amongst women. Many women, being uneducated and therefore not in possession of French, benefited from awareness-raising programmes on life skills targeted at women in national languages that they listened to while conducting their domestic chores.

Radio remains Mali's main information source and is still widely accessed via traditional radio sets, highlighting the digital divide between Global North countries and those in the South struggling to have reliable internet (Heywood et al., 2023). However, as in Niger and Burkina Faso, radio in Mali is increasingly accessed by mobile phones (in 2020, mobile phone subscribers represented 101.89% of the population in Mali, suggesting that many subscribers have more than one connection (Datareportal, 2020)). Listeners listen extensively to FM radio on their

mobiles without needing access to costly, and often inaccessible, internet. Many mobiles, including the widely used Tecno from the Chinese mobile phone manufacturer, are equipped with in-built FM radio chips or apps. Listeners also use solar powered radios, often supplied by NGOs, to listen to radio broadcasts without needing access to electricity. These radios have the advantage of having phone chargers and lights attached, making them multifunctional (this is particularly the case in Burkina Faso, as we will see later, where internet access and electricity are limited). The falling costs of mobiles, which access radio stations, have brought about a change in the way that audiences listen to radio, highlighting the convergence between radio and digital mobile technologies.

Mali's radio is characterised by the culture of listening groups, which are linked to local or community radios and are mixed or single-sex. '*Grins*' or 'tea groups' (Bondez, 2013) are primarily for men or boys who gather around radio sets or mobile phones to listen to and discuss programmes while drinking tea. In recent decades, women have become increasingly associated with local radio as a tool for women's empowerment, as we will see in Chap. 6 (Heywood & Ivey, 2021a). According to the 2019 Annuaire de Médias Mali (Malian Media Yearbook), there are 373 radios in Mali (Konaté, 2020). In addition to the state radio with its national channel and nine regional channels, there is the UN radio, Mikado FM,[2] 200 licensed radios, including 131 non-commercial and 69 commercial radios (Konaté, 2020). Mali also boasts many volunteer-run community, religious and confessional radio stations, most of which are members of the union URTEL, the Union des Radios et Televisions Libres du Mali, an association that seeks to develop and promote free radio and television broadcasting in Mali and to protect its members. Despite Mali's low position on the World Press Freedom Index, radio is widely trusted and meets a range of interests. International radios such as RFI, BBC Africa, Deutsche Welle, and Voice of America (VOA) broadcast their information via these private and community radios and provide the stations with a vital source of income. Media development organisations such as Fondation Hirondelle, this research project's partner, also broadcast information and awareness-raising campaigns via radio. As Konaté (2020) states, the increasing levels of insecurity in the country are

[2] https://minusma.unmissions.org/la-radio-de-la-minusma

impacting radio, as broadcasters in conflict areas must take care not to criticise armed groups given possible reprisals.[3]

Radio in Niger

Radio in Niger followed a similar path to that of Mali. The first radio in Niger, Radio Niger, was created in October 1958 broadcasting only to the capital and its immediate area and was managed by the Société de Radiodiffusion de la France d'Outre-mer (French Broadcasting Corporation of France Overseas—SORAFOM), formerly Radio France d'Outre-mer, which focused on developing radio broadcasting in French overseas territories (France d'Outre-mer). In the lead-up to independence in 1960, its aim was to create an 'African radio' designed for, and ultimately to be produced by, Africans in sub-Saharan Africa. SORAFOM created new radios throughout Africa, including Radio Mali mentioned above (Ilboudo, 2003; Perret, 2010). It was under SORAFOM that radio clubs were launched with the aim of encouraging radio listeners in rural environments to participate in the production of programmes in national languages, such as Hausa and Zarma, which would later lead to the explosion of community radios throughout the country (Perret, 2010). The Association of Radio Clubs was set up in 1962 and started broadcasting three years later as farm radios with information on fertilisers, crops, cattle rearing and health awareness-raising themes (Ilboudo, 2001).

In 1967, the state took control of the media and created the Office de Radiodiffusion et Télévision du Niger (Office of Radio and Television of Niger - ORTN), established by law no 67–011 of 11 February 1967 and modified by ordinance no 78–21 of 12 October 1978. Following a military coup in 1974, Radio Niger was renamed Voix du Sahel, within ORTN, broadcasting programmes about agriculture, livestock, and health in national languages mainly to rural areas. The arrival of FM to Niger in the 1980s, as in Mali, revolutionised the country's radio environment and, with finance from the German Agency for International Cooperation, led to regional stations being created in all provinces (Hamani, 2018). Broadcasting in national languages marked a change from previous

[3] Since the period covered by this research, Mali's ruling military junta suspended Radio France International (RFI) and France 24 in 2022 for allegedly reporting false allegations of abuse by Mali's army, and other journalists have been detained https://www.france24.com/en/france/20220317-mali-s-ruling-junta-orders-suspension-of-france-24-and-rfi

output, which had mainly been in French with summaries in national languages.

In Niger, the radio revolution sweeping through much of Africa took hold in the 1990s with the advent of democracy and political liberalisation, replacing ORTN's state monopoly of the media (Myers, 2014; Peter et al., 2007). Private radio stations began to emerge after the National Sovereign Conference in 1991, which is discussed more in Chap. 2, with Radio and Music (R&M) being the first private station in Niger created in 1994, followed by Radio Anfani in 1995. (The latter became one of the partner radios of Fondation Hirondelle and is included in this project.) Community radios also began at this time (for example, Bankilaré in 1999 and Tchintabaraden in 2000), with an additional 100 community radio stations springing up over the course of the following decade. This was encouraged by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and a variety of other international donors. Press freedom suffered during the authoritarian rule of President Mamadou Tandja from 1999 to 2010 but has improved over the years, with Niger moving from 104th on the World Press Freedom Index in 2010 to 57th in 2020 (RSF, 2020). Radio in Niger, as in Mali, is characterised by being widely accessed by mobile phones, increasing interaction between listeners and radios (Gilberds & Myers, 2012; Nassanga et al., 2013; Sullivan, 2011), and by a culture of listening groups and *fadas* (Boyer, 2014), which, like Mali's *grins* mentioned above, encourage citizens to participate in public life. Mostly men gather to listen to and discuss radio programmes in *fadas* (Masquelier, 2019), whereas listening clubs and groups, associated with many community radios stations, are mixed or single-sex (Heywood & Ivey, 2021a). They enable listeners to discuss broadcasts, gain further information on given subjects through NGO and expert visits, contribute to selecting subjects for future programmes, and give feedback to the radio stations.

In 2019, in addition to the state radio, ORTN, which is widely accessible and accessed, there were 184 community radio stations spread over the eight regions in Niger (Amadou, 2021), the majority of which are affiliated to the Coordination Nationale des Radios Communautaires au Niger[4] (National Council of Community Radios of Niger—CN-RACOM), itself created in 2004, and 60 commercial radio stations (CN-RACOM, 2017). Despite challenges from the authorities, these stations succeed in providing critical journalism. There is also religious and confessional radio

[4] https://cnracom.org/

and several international radios, such as RFI, VOA, BBC, and broadcasts by media development organisations. Community radios in Niger do not have the right to broadcast news (CN-RACOM, 2007) and therefore rely on material supplied by international and NGO radios sources. The latter form an important source of income, equipment, and training for community radios.

Radio in Burkina Faso

As in Mali and Niger and many other African states, radio broadcasting in Burkina Faso started post-independence. Radio Upper Volta, created in 1959, was the first station and was government-run, acting as the mouthpiece of the single-party state. It was predominantly broadcast in French targeting the capital's elite and adapted its content to reflect the changes in government (Nombré, 2000). It opened a relay radio in 1962 in the second city, Bobo Dioulasso, continuing to broadcast similar programmes rather than more regional news and information to target the local populations. Rural radio was launched in 1969 as part of a national radio network to broadcast educational and information programmes to the mostly illiterate rural communities, to promote new agricultural methods and boost development. It was launched by the then leader Colonel Sangoulé Lamizana and broadcast in national languages to encourage listeners to implement the proposed development policies. Local stations supplied radios to listeners who could not afford to buy one, leading to the creation of the listening club culture where listeners would gather around a radio set to listen to broadcasts that were then discussed collectively (Nombré, 2000). This received financial and technological support from Germany until 1985, after which, due to poor financing, organisation, and technical failures, there was a decline in radio listening, particularly with regard to the lack of trust in state radio information, which had been used as a protectionist and propaganda tool for almost 40 years (Balima, 2000). Foreign radio provided a welcome alternative, as did the explosion of local or associative radios from 1991, which broadcast information of interest to the community and in national languages, reaching 80% of the country.

Having been considered 'one of the success stories of Africa regarding freedom of the press', Burkina Faso's ratings declined from 36th in 2019 to 58th in 2023 following the coups d'état in 2022 and the deteriorating security situation (RSF, 2023). Press freedom was legally guaranteed in the 1991 Constitution, yet frequencies were controlled by the state, and

local radios, which were required to have a registered office in the town where they broadcast, were not permitted to broadcast nationally. Capitant (2008) outlines the complex system that existed whereby local radios had to create a second separate registered address if they wanted to extend their reach, with a new frequency, broadcasting different material.

A press law was introduced in the 1993 Code de l'Information and, as in Mali and Niger, Burkina Faso has a regulatory body, the Conseil Supérieur de l'Information (CSI) set up in 1995 (Frère & Balima, 2003). The CSI was criticised for being under state influence (Loada, 1999) and for suspending programmes critical of the government. The CSI was replaced by the Conseil Supérieur de la Communication (CSC) by decree n°95,304/PRES/PM/MCC of 1 April 1995 in application of Article 143 of the Code of Information (CSC Burkina, 2015). The CSC is the new administrative and regulatory body, whose task of remaining seemingly independent is challenging given the security situation.

In 1999, the Radiodiffusion nationale du Burkina (RNB) and the Télévision nationale du Burkina (TNB) were transformed into an Établissement public de l'État (EPE) [State Public Establishment] and named under the current banner 'Radiodiffusion-Télévision du Burkina (RTB)'. The RTB comprises television (five stations), radio (four stations) and a rural radio division. In 2020, Burkinabès were the most enthusiastic radio listeners according to a Kantar study of eight sub-Saharan countries (2021), with 92% of the population aged over 15 listening to the radio every day, with an average of 3 hours per person per day. There are 164 private and public radio stations in Burkina Faso. The 135 private radio stations comprise 40 faith-based stations, 51 community radio stations, 40 commercial stations and 4 international stations (UNICEF, 2018). The BBC, VOA, and Radio France[5] Internationale (RFI) broadcast full-time and INGO radio studios and air information and awareness campaigns via radio. One of these is Studio Yafa, whose radio output is analysed here.

Studio Tamani, Studio Kalangou, and Studio Yafa

This book centres around research conducted on the radio output of the Swiss-based media development organisation Fondation Hirondelle.[6] The

[5] RFI broadcasts were suspended in 2022 on the charge of false reports relating to an alleged foiled coup attempt and giving a voice to Islamist militants (Wilkins, 2022).

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

research has covered multiple projects, starting in 2017, in Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso, and the Democratic Republic of Congo. The overarching objective has been to assess the radio provision by Fondation Hirondelle in various topic areas, predominantly women's empowerment but also youth, misinformation, and COVID-19. Participatory approaches involving working closely with radio experts, journalists, associations and academics in the field have been key. It is acknowledged that the purposive sampling of the studios discussed in this book provides only a very specific glimpse into the radio sector in the three countries. Neither they nor the discussions in this book can claim to be representative of the sector. Nonetheless, the studios' work can highlight the significant role radio can play in promoting women's empowerment, particularly given the extensive network of (community) partner radios they work with throughout each country.

Fondation Hirondelle is one of many international media development NGOs that operate throughout Africa and face the challenges of ongoing curbs on their operations, especially from political opposition and the deterioration in the security situation in many countries but also technologically. Fondation Hirondelle was created in 1995 and aims to provide independent and timely information to crisis- and conflict-affected populations. It initially took over from Radio Agatashya following the Rwandan genocide in 1994. Radio Agatashya[7] (Radio Hirondelle) was created with Médecins sans Frontiers (MSF) on the Congolese border with Rwanda to provide alternative information to that of hate radio in Rwanda, particularly Radio des Milles Collines. Fondation Hirondelle marked its 25th anniversary in 2022 and celebrated having created 23 news media since its establishment. Initially broadcasting using radio, with retransmissions via FM local radio, it recognised the need to adapt to the changing media environment by now broadcasting multimedia programmes and via websites and streaming services, such as Facebook, WhatsApp and Viamo.[8] It currently operates in six countries (Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso, DRC, CAR, and Madagascar), and according to its website,[9] its vision is to provide 'independent, credible and impartial information that is close to its

[7] https://www.hirondelle.org/en/rwanda-en

[8] Viamo is a Canadian social enterprise specialising in the implementation of audio service platforms available on telephone networks. In Burkina Faso, Viamo operates the 3–2-1 platform available on Orange. Studio Yafa's programmes broadcast on this platform.

[9] https://www.hirondelle.org/en/who-we-are#mission-and-impact

audience contributing to ending conflict and building more peaceful societies'. By doing so, it helps promote dialogue, enables all and especially marginalised communities to make informed decisions, promote inclusivity, build social cohesion and challenge messages that fuel conflict. Its multiple studios are run by teams of national editors and journalists, supervised and supported initially by experts from the head office in Lausanne. According to the CEO, they stress:

> factual information, locally produced in local languages by local teams, really proximity information for the people. Our aim is to enable people. It's not to tell them what to do or what to think, but to give them the capacity to understand what's going on, to understand the environment they live with and to make their own choices. (Vuillemin, 2018)

As the aim of this book is to examine radio and women's empowerment, it is important to recognise the limitations presented by investigating the output of a Western NGO radio, which has its own gender policies and is therefore not representative of the radio environment in the three countries under analysis. However, it provides useful insight into the media environment and state of women's empowerment in the countries, contributing to the growing literature on these topics. A further limitation is that while this media development organisation aims to provide independent information, it is inevitably shaped by itself, being based in the Global North and funded by associated bodies. It therefore impacts perceptions of radio as an 'Africanized' medium, being funded by Western donors and subject to ideological constraints (Parks, 2008). To go some way to counteract this, Fondation Hirondelle is proud of the indigenous/exogenous structure it has built in its studios, which are generally run by local editors-in-chief and staffed by local journalists, contributing to challenging top-down donor directives.

> We are not a standalone entity. We don't have our own funding. So, our partners may ask us to work on gender issues, on peace processes, reconciliation, democratic elections. But once that general topic is agreed upon, how we cover it, with whom again, what angles, with what format and all of that, that's the decision of the newsroom or the charter of the media that defines it. (Vuillemin, 2018)

Despite this donor interaction, Vuillemin remained steadfast in not compromising Fondation Hirondelle's values. However, this comes with responsibility and the need to recognise the organisation's position of power in the countries in which they operate. She stated the need to:

> act responsibly and ensure we don't abuse that power. We can't be forced or be taken as doing something which is not in line with our values. It may mean a lot of "top-down", because for me, it's something [our values] that is not going to be negotiable. But it's about respect and it's about not abusing power. (Vuillemin, 2018)

Studio Tamani

In 2013, Fondation Hirondelle created Studio Tamani,[10] which broadcasts daily factual information in the form of news, debates, and magazines. It was set up, together with URTEL mentioned above, following the 2012 military coup in March 2012 and the French military intervention in early 2013, to provide independent information and promote constructive dialogue. According to participants in this book's research, Studio Tamani is widely trusted and perceived as independent. The Studio broadcasts programmes to the nation from the capital, Bamako, by satellite to a network of 85 community and commercial radio partners, who, in turn, use their own FM networks to broadcast to their communities. Programmes are aired in five languages (French, Bambara, Peulh, Tamasheq, and Songhai) and comprise magazines, news, and a debate programme—*Le Grand Dialogue*—which is also televised. Studio Tamani, with URTEL, was instrumental in setting up Mali's Charter for Radio and Television Stations[11] in Mali, adopted in 2021, the aim of which was to strengthen the constructive role of the media for social cohesion and peace given the insecurity context in the Sahel.

Studio Kalangou

Studio Kalangou[12] was created in Niamey by Fondation Hirondelle in 2016. Like Studio Tamani, it broadcasts from its base in Niamey, the

[10] https://www.studiotamani.org
[11] https://www.hirondelle.org/pdfviewer/?lang=en&id=438
[12] https://www.studiokalangou.org/

capital, via satellite to 52 partner radios (in 2022) throughout the country. Despite being younger than its Malian equivalent, Studio Kalangou has quickly gained ground, moving from broadcasting general news, debates, and magazine programmes to an advanced range of programmes, including specific weekly programmes on women-related issues produced by a dedicated team of women journalists, *Espace Femmes*; broadcasts on legal issues, environmental topics and discussion programmes, *Tous à la Fada*, for youth produced by youth. Studio Kalangou's daily programme lasts 2 hours and comprises a 15-minute news programme in four national languages and French, followed by a 45-minute debate programme with invited guests. The language of debate changes throughout the week. The full broadcast ends with a 3-minute magazine programme on the topic of the debate. According to several focus groups in this research, radio information cannot always be trusted in Niger, yet Studio Kalangou is widely perceived as independent. Whilst funded by Western donors and therefore subject to ideological constraints (Parks, 2008), it is not under the direct influences imposed on the country's state and commercial radios. It claims to provide 'independent, professional, relevant, and accessible radio news, information and dialogue programs'.[13]

Studio Yafa

At the time of publication, Studio Yafa was the newest member of the Hirondelle family, having only started broadcasting in 2019. Like Studio Kalangou and Studio Tamani, this studio aims to provide information and promote dialogue, but its main audience is youth. Young people participate in the production and content of broadcasts, allowing their opinions to be heard by wider society. It produces short daily radio magazine programmes in four languages (Dioula, French, Mooré and Fulfuldé) and a longer weekly debate programme called *Ya-Debat* on the country's social and political life. Content is also broadcast on social media and on televised platforms. During the research project, it had 37 partner radio stations throughout the country. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Studio Yafa launched a weekly 30-minute humanitarian programme—Faso Yafa ("peace in Burkina Faso" in Mooré)—targeting the rapidly growing numbers of IDPs in the country. The practical advice and information it provides, which have continued beyond COVID-19, are discussed in Chap. 7.

[13] https://www.hirondelle.org/en/information-and-dialogue

These internationally funded studios, which were set up by external overseas organisations, inevitably function differently from organic community media projects. Yet because they do not broadcast directly to the public, they are reliant on community and commercial radio partners throughout the country to rebroadcast programmes received via satellite using their own FM networks. They also have teams of correspondents throughout the countries who feed back local information for inclusion in future programmes. As a result, output does not focus on the capital but on the country more generally.

The complex relationship between aid and journalism and the role of foreign development assistance in shaping African media systems must not be ignored (Paterson et al., 2018). We have discussed the major influence that colonial powers have had over shaping African media, yet foreign intervention continues to be significant, influencing populations and contributing to policy changes. As Harris (2018) argued, countries, which are considered "economically weak" are vulnerable to external pressures, especially in the areas of media policy making. The role of radio studios in this research is no different, as they also exert an outside influence on media in the countries. This may be through buying airtime from community radios for their programmes to be broadcast and who become dependent on the studios for their survival, or through training journalists with its implicit normative Western assumptions, or through basic agenda-setting and gatekeeping. Whilst also introducing positive changes such as the positive gender discrimination of Studio Yafa discussed in Chap. 7, the effect of foreign (Western) media support and the associated monitoring and evaluation processes must be fully reflected upon and critiqued. The extent to which the measurements in these processes are determined by international organisations using Western standards and expectations should play no small part in research projects.

Section Two: Understanding Empowerment

This section introduces the argument for the book by outlining theoretical frameworks used to understand perceptions of empowerment. For the book to discuss women's empowerment and radio's contribution, we need to discuss two discourses on women's rights, one which belongs to the field of international development and emphasises an individual trajectory for women and the other which is oriented towards African feminisms and stresses the women's relationality in society. The latter can often be

ignored or sidelined to pursue the many tick boxes of the former imposed by donors, foreign agency policies and international organisations. As Vincent Tucker (1999: 1) states:

> The development discourse is part of an imperial process whereby other peoples are appropriated and turned into objects. It is an essential part of the process whereby the "developed" countries manage, control, and even create the Third World economically, politically, sociologically, and culturally. It is a process whereby the lives of some peoples, their plans, their hopes, their imaginations, are shaped by others who frequently share neither their lifestyles, nor their hopes nor their values.

Research projects such as this cannot be conducted without including the perspectives of those in the Global South generally, or in West Africa more specifically in this case, to allow participants to have space to promote their concepts and ideas and to avoid them simply having to implement the Global North's predetermined agendas.

Development Discourse

Discussions associating women and development have undergone many stages (see Rathgeber, 1990). The well-documented Women in Development (WID) approach of the 1960s demanded the inclusion of women and women's issues in development projects but without questioning existing social structures (see Kabeer, 1994). From the mid-1970s, the Woman and Development (WAD) movement focused on the relationship between patriarchy and capitalism, stating that women have always participated in and contributed to economic development. In the late 1970s and 1980s, the Gender and Development (GAD) approach challenged the dynamics of existing gender roles and relations, particularly the power relations between men and women. It also highlighted instances of male bias not only throughout society but also inherent in the development process itself. However, as Kabeer (1994) states, for many people, this process of renaming just replaced the label women with gender. These approaches may have been designed to result in greater inclusion and participation by women in projects but did not consider how any increased involvement could turn out to be a burden, as they simply increased a woman's workload (Rowlands, 1997). Succeeding in allowing women's economic activity to be increased, for example, may simply mean a woman

has to work longer as their domestic routines will not have been reduced to accommodate the new tasks. Participation by men in domestic activity was not correspondingly altered.

A broader approach now including the concept of 'women's empowerment' emerged in the late 1980s–1990s, as identified by Caroline Moser (1989). It amalgamated the questioning of gender roles with a bottom-up approach and distinguished male bias on one hand from mechanisms of subordination affecting women on the other (Rowlands, 1997). Small or tokenistic changes in the lives of women to satisfy the goals of particular projects would not suffice. Instead, to make a difference and to 'empower' women, wholesale structural (political, economic and cultural) changes would be needed (Batliwala, 1993, 2007). Such structural changes would recognise inequalities and would enable individuals to know and assert their right to implement their rights. This would, in turn, trigger more structural changes' (Batliwala, 1993; Kabeer, 1994; Rowlands, 1997; Sen, 1997).

Yet, as with many development terms, 'empowerment' is a concept that is blurred at best (Cornwall & Eade, 2010; Ewerling et al., 2017; Kabeer, 1999), and clearer understandings and definitions have been called for. In many cases, development buzzwords serve only to give legitimacy to the actions decided upon by development agencies from the North (Cornwall & Brock, 2006), and the language used within development has been widely critiqued (see Lewis, 2009). Its vagueness and assumptions that 'one size fits all' result in 'transnational instruments set in place as a language of rights which target universal and transhistorical subjects as clients and beneficiaries who "receive" what has been conceptualized as just by many others'. Whatever buzzword or term is used, it must, according to Sen (2006), maintain the feminist transformative agenda-setting meanings contained within words such as 'empowerment' and 'women's human rights'.

Batliwala, who claimed that the term 'empowerment' was a 'used and abused' concept (2007: 557), helpfully talks of the 'empowerment spiral', which can extend beyond grassroots-level participation, a concept that will be discussed throughout the book. Mukhopadhyay defines empowerment as being a catch-all solution for all gender issues or a technical fix that is 'ahistorical, apolitical, de-contextualised […] that leaves the prevailing and unequal power relations intact' (2007: 135–136). Kabeer examines the concept from a *dis*empowerment perspective and 'in terms of the ability to make choices: to be disempowered, therefore, implies to be denied

choice' (1999: 436–437). Women need to be able to critically assess their disempowered position to determine a strategy for empowerment. In other words, awakening a critical consciousness in a woman is essential for her to take control of her own situation and be able to gain an 'ability to make strategic life choices in a context where this ability was previously denied to them' (Kabeer, 1999: 437). This means that, for this to happen, empowerment cannot be bestowed on women (Cornwall, 2016) but must be seized. It cannot be done to, or for, anyone else. According to Sholkamy (2010: 257), 'alleviating power and enabling women to make some income can better lives, but the enabling environment that confirms the right to work, property, safety, voice, sexuality and freedom is not created by sewing machines or micro-credit alone'.

Women must critically evaluate the gender and social norms of their society. As Freire states, 'the oppressed must confront reality critically, simultaneously objectifying and acting upon that reality', adding that 'a mere perception of reality not followed by this critical intervention will not lead to a transformation of objective reality—precisely because it is not a true perception' (1996: 37). The provision of independent and factual information, which forms the core of this book, as part of this process is essential for women to make transformative decisions about their lives. Without that information, women's lives remain dependent on others making those decisions for them. Radio, in this instance, is the main source of information in the three countries under discussion: Mali, Niger, and Burkina Faso. Ensuring it fully represents women, allows them an equal voice, and provides balanced information concerning them is essential to promote an empowering environment.

Providing a clearer definition of empowerment, Kabeer outlines three preconditions that can be used for its assessment: 'resources' (finances, family or community support), 'agency' ('the ability to define one's goals and act upon them' (1999: 438), and 'achievements' (outcomes) (1999: 437). Stromquist's model is founded on a sociopolitical concept (1995: 14) and is divided into psychological, economic, and political aspects. The psychological component means enabling women to feel they can act at personal and social levels to improve their condition and suggests overcoming 'learned helplessness' that has resulted from deeply entrenched subordination. However, this cannot be taught, and an empowering environment is needed to overcome this. We will return to this empowering environment during various chapters in the book in relation to radio's associated role. The economic aspect of empowerment proposed by

Stromquist suggests that women should be able to engage in a productive activity that will allow them some financial autonomy, granting them economic and therefore more general independence. The third component—the political one—raises critical consciousness again and involves women being able to critically evaluate their surroundings from a political and social perspective. This will enable women to mobilise for social change (Stromquist, 1995).

Empowerment is therefore a process of change, not an instant or one-off solution. However, concepts of 'power', which form the root of empowerment, must be deconstructed, along with the manner in which they can be achieved and operationalised within different contexts. Using examples from South Asia, Kabeer (1994: 229) states that:

> the multidimensional nature of power suggests that empowerment strategies for women must build on the "power within" as a necessary adjunct to improving their ability to control resources, to determine agendas and make decisions.

This 'power *within*' is included in four different concepts of power proposed by Rowlands (1997: 13), which are widely drawn upon in various fields, for example, economic domains (Alemu et al., 2018; Pereznieto & Taylor, 2014). These concepts are (1) 'power *to*', referring to 'generative or productive power' or power that promotes others' abilities and potentials without domination; (2) 'power *over*', or a controlling power, for example, over access to and control over financial, physical assets or information; (3) 'power *with*', or collective power; and (4) 'power f*rom within*' or psychological power, self-acceptance and self-belief. These concepts are developed in Chap. 6 when discussing Radio Scout and women's listening associations.

The manner in which empowerment can be achieved by women has also been explored. Kabeer (1999) discusses it in relation to a multi-layered decision-making approach and a consideration of first- and second-order strategic choices. The first of these two levels of empowerment is on a macro level, for example, whether to engage in politics (Arestoff & Djemai, 2016; Heywood, 2020b). These choices made by women may challenge prevailing social norms within a community and may have potentially negative repercussions. Members of the extended family may block them, as they could divert women from their traditional domestic role, thus undermining the functioning of the household, or, in the case

of men, the choices may trigger male disempowerment. The second is on a more micro level reflecting 'everyday decisions which do not affect the overall outcome of a woman's life' (Kabeer, 1999: 437). These may be the ability to choose when to go to the market, what to buy, or starting up a small business and using the income to buy food for the family or pay for transport for their children to go to school. These choices will encounter less hostility from within the family, as beliefs and traditions are not being challenged and daily routines are not disrupted.

This develops Sen's concept of 'capabilities' or people's potential to live the lives they want and achieve valued ways of 'being and doing' (1999). The 'structures of constraint' (Kabeer, 2005) that restrict this potential are built on societal, traditional and cultural norms and values leading to disempowerment or the 'inability to achieve one's goals due to the inability to make choices that are contingent on unsurmountable and deep-rooted restrictions' (Heywood & Ivey, 2021a).

International Agreements

A series of international agreements, conferences, and documents have focused on women and gender, many of which are associated with development issues. In 1979, the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW[14]) provided definitions of what constitutes discrimination against women and determined an agenda for national action to end such discrimination. Its provisions are binding on signatory countries. Whilst the countries in this book are signatories to the Convention, their practices are often in violation of the provisions. For example, in 2020, CEDAW[15] reported on Mali's failure to implement policies and a legal framework to ban FGM.

The fourth World Conference on Women marked a turning point for the global agenda on gender equality. It resulted in the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action,[16] which flagged 12 key areas where urgent action was

[14] https://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/cedaw.htm

[15] 'The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) said millions of women and girls in Mali are subjected to "grave and systematic violations of rights" through FGM, a traditional practice that involves partial or total removal of external female genitalia for non-medical reasons.' https://www.ohchr.org/en/news/2020/06/mali-failure-criminalise-fgm-violation-womens-fundamental-rights-un-experts

[16] https://www.un.org/en/conferences/women/beijing1995#:~:text=The%20conference%20marked%20a%20significant,policy%20document%20on%20gender%20equality

needed to ensure greater equality and opportunities for women and men, girls, and boys. It was adopted by 189 countries. In 2000, UN Security Council Resolution 1325[17] was agreed upon, focusing on women's role in peace building and the impact of armed conflict on women. It promotes women's participation and representation at all levels of decision-making, the protection of women and girls, and the integration of a gender perspective in post-conflict processes and UN activities. Fifteen years later, in 2015, the Sustainable Development Goals[18] (SDGs) were adopted, building on the success of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and aiming to end all forms of poverty while protecting the planet. SDG goal 5 aims to 'achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls'. It also targets ending discrimination, violence against women, practices such as child marriage and FGM, unpaid care and domestic work, participation and leadership in public life, sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights, and economic rights.

Regional agreements are of relevance here and include the Maputo Protocol of 2003 adopted by the African Union. It is binding on member states and requires them to implement and enforce laws and policies regarding women's rights. It fills a gap left by CEDAW in that it prohibits violence of all kinds against women, and signatories are bound to enact measures and set up frameworks to prevent such violence. In 2016, Mali was found by the African Court to be in violation of this protocol, as its Family Code was inconsistent with provisions on the minimum age of marriage, consent to marriage, and right to inheritance (IJR Centre, 2018). Niger has signed but not yet ratified the protocol,[19] and Burkina Faso has ratified the main international and regional women's rights protection instruments, but their provisions remain widely violated in law and practice.

[17] https://peacemaker.un.org/node/105

[18] https://sdgs.un.org/goals

[19] https://au.int/sites/default/files/treaties/37077-sl-PROTOCOL%20TO%20THE%20AFRICAN%20CHARTER%20ON%20HUMAN%20AND%20PEOPLE%27S%20RIGHTS%20ON%20THE%20RIGHTS%20OF%20WOMEN%20IN%20AFRICA.pdf

African Feminist Discourse

Empowerment, therefore, as a part of development discourse, stems from Western epistemologies and from a Northern feminist agenda. It talks of 'rights' to be given, or bestowed on, beneficiaries in the South who then become recipients rather than active participants in the choice, formulation, or application of these rights. As Nnaemeka (2003: 375) states, to avoid this, an 'honest effort to humanize development processes and not assume that economic growth guarantees development' must be made. Drawing on feminist models that aim to 'revise and retain African traditions' (Chigwedere, 2010: 24), African feminisms challenge the exclusionary practices of Western feminisms. Rather than discussing theories from just a women's perspective and whereby men are perceived as the 'other', they seek to include both men and women, allowing all to contribute to gender inclusion, collaboration, and accommodation (Nkealah, 2016). They also seek to base their theorising on localised indigenous practices that are important to populations rather than repressing or homogenising an individual area's historical trajectory.

African feminisms (in the plural to represent their multiplicity and to avoid falling into the trap of homogenising their wealth) have been widely discussed and have strived to resist Western cultural imperialism, theorising from an African cultural perspective, an African geopolitical location, and an African ideological viewpoint (Nkealah, 2016). Their aim, according to Nnaemeka (2003: 380), is for African women to work for social change by building 'on the indigenous by defining and modulating their feminist struggle in deference to cultural and local imperatives'. Amongst their number are *womanism* (KolaWole, 1997; Ogunyemi, 1985), which examines feminism as an expression of Black culture and tradition and the forms of domination oppressing African women's lives; *stiwanism* (from the acronym 'Social Transformation Including Women of Africa') (Ogundipe-Leslie, 1994), which emphasises women in Africa rather than in diasporas and was also conceived as a transformative movement that did not exclude men; and *motherism* (Acholonu, 1995), which highlights the complementarity of African men and women and the centrality of rural women and their ability to give and nurture life as 'the living personification of the earth and all her rich blessings of love, patience, knowledge, strength, abundance, life and spirituality' (Acholonu, 1995). *Femalism* (Opara, 2005) focuses on the bodies of African women; *nego-feminism* (Nnaemeka, 2003) stresses 'negotiation, give and take, compromise, and

balance' (Nnaemeka, 2003: 378) and how individuals can support and learn from one another regardless of class, race or gender; and *snail-sense* feminism (Ezeigbo, 2012: 27) is the tendency to 'accommodate or tolerate the male and cooperate with men'. Whilst these alternatives challenge the exclusions felt amongst African women in Western feminisms, they have been criticised for their heteronormativity. Gender is perceived as a binary concept, excluding lesbian, bisexual and transsexual women. Similarly, men, whether or not they are included in a particular variant, are also heterosexual men, and they are discussed, or negotiated with, in their roles as husbands, fathers, brothers and so on (Ogundipe-Leslie, 1994). As Kolawole (1997: 15) states, 'to the majority of ordinary Africans, lesbianism is a non-existent issue because it is a mode of self-expression that is completely strange to their world-view'. African feminisms are also challenged for their narrowness. In their attempts to ensure that cultural specificity and indigenous views are foregrounded, they create an unintended paradox whereby they often localise theories to the extent that they alienate other women from outside their own area (Ogunyemi, 1985). Nkealah (2016) also questions who these African feminisms are targeting and whether they include diasporas or are just for continental populations.

This book therefore pays necessary attention to African feminisms and the manner in which they consider women in relation to others rather than pursuing women's individual trajectories. It avoids sidelining African perspectives and omitting cultural and local imperatives, a charge often levelled at development projects in their analysis and implementation of practices. It also avoids portraying women as a homogeneous group and instead pursues an intersectional approach, the concept coined by Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw in 1989, while bearing in mind that although intersectionality may foreground 'understandings of how gender is also constituted by class, race, ethnicity and informed by normative notions of sexuality, it cannot fully account for the diversity of women's experiences' (Bastia et al., 2014). As Nnaemeka (2003: 337) states, 'building on the indigenous creates the feeling of ownership that opens the door to a participative, democratic process where stakeholders' imagination, values, and worldviews are taken into account while mitigating stakeholders' alienation, which could result from the invalidation of their worldviews and values'.

However, given that the condition of women is widely determined by men as society's main decision-makers, consideration must also be given to masculinities and the multiple positions of men. In other words, just as

women are not a homogenous group, as stated above, neither are men. If women's situations change, perhaps under the blurred understanding of 'empowerment', this may result in a negative impact on men and in their *dis*empowerment. In turn, given society's normative expectations of the role and position of men, this can result in challenges to apparent improvements in women's lives from male family members. The concept of hegemonic masculinities, which is based on gender inequality and 'legitimises men's dominant position in society and justifies the subordination of women' (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005), and therefore their disempowerment, is discussed in greater detail in Chap. 4.

Women in Mali, Niger, and Burkina Faso

In the three countries, women are subject to widespread gender inequality. Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger are at the bottom of the Gender Inequality Index (147, 158 and 154 out of 162 countries, respectively, on the 2019 Index[20]) and the Human Development Index (182, 184 and 189, respectively, out of 189 countries and territories) (UNDR, 2020).

Marriage

Child marriage is widespread in the Sahel, rising to 81.7% of women in Niger, 69.0% in Mali and 62.2% in Burkina Faso (Yaya et al., 2019). It is widely perceived as a necessary precaution to prevent pregnancy outside of marriage but is rooted in gender inequality and patriarchal control over women, limiting their sexuality and reproductive choices. Importantly, child marriage can relieve families of financial burdens as prospective husbands pay a bride price to the girl's family in the form of a sum of money or its equivalence in goods. As Guirkinger et al. (2021: 2) state in their study on marriage, divorce, and remarriage in rural Northern Burkina Faso—but also applicable to Mali and Niger— 'marriage is viewed not only as the formation of a couple for productive and reproductive purposes but also as an alliance between families' (Laurent, 2013).

Marriage is perceived as giving girls status within society, but in many cases, once married and in order to fulfil the expectations of wife and mother, girls are deprived of the freedom to continue to associate with their own family and friends and are moved from the control of their

[20] https://data.un.org/DocumentData.aspx?id=415

father to that of their new husband. More often than not, girls married underage are more likely to suffer mental and physical trauma. They may enter marriage with limited skills and little awareness of what awaits them. They are more likely to be subject to domestic violence, more likely to marry older men, and more likely to encounter complications in childbirth and pregnancy. They are also less likely to stay in school, as they may be forced to abandon their education just because they are married or to pursue their new domestic role. Married women's (and girls') freedom to participate in community activities can also be severely restricted, as we will discuss in Chap. 6.

Widespread awareness-raising campaigns in the three countries provide information about the dangers of child marriage, and many progressive religious leaders are also teaching that it is not a requirement of Islam. Nonetheless, awareness remains limited. In Mali, according to the Family Code (Articles 281 and 284), girls under the minimum age (at least 15 years old) may still be married with their parents' consent and that of a judge. In Niger, the legal age to marry is 21 years old for both girls and boys (Civil Code, Art. 144, 148 and 158) (Ministère de la Justice, 2005). However, there is a provision for a girl to marry at 15 with her parents' consent, while this is 18 for boys (Civil Code, Art. 144). A clear understanding of state laws surrounding marriage and the legal age is not extensive in many areas, and laws are not always considered relevant, as many marry according to religious or customary law (Cooper, 2010). In Burkina Faso, the minimum legal age to marry is 17 for girls but 20 for boys unless an exemption is granted by civil courts according to which girls can marry at 15 and boys at 18 (Burkina Faso: Code des personnes et de la famille [Code of Persons and the Family], Article 238). Whilst statements promising to raise the legal marital age were issued by the government in Burkina Faso in 2016, little progress has been made. Indeed, the persistence of child marriage reflects a high level of social acceptance, since 44% of Burkinabès believe that it is acceptable for a girl to be married before the age of 18 (SIGI, 2018). A revised Penal Code was adopted in 2018, broadening the definition of marriage and penalising all forms of child marriage (Burkina Faso 1996). On 31 May 2018, the National Assembly of Burkina Faso adopted a new Penal Code, which contains a new article broadening the definition of marriage. Marriage must be performed by a civil registrar or according to religious traditions and rules. This is an important step, as, without the enforcement of these provisions, child

marriages could not be categorised as legal marriages, and therefore, perpetrators could not be sanctioned.

In all three countries, arranged and polygamous child marriage persists, highlighting the disempowered situation of many women. However, as we determine in later discussions throughout the chapters, this was challenged by many young girls interviewed here who were confident about their involvement in the choice of their future husbands and by other women who said they had initiated divorces.

Polygamy

Polygamous unions are extensive. Many women are also married as second (third or fourth) wives to avoid being childless, the state of widowhood, or the stigma of being a divorcee. New (second or subsequent) wives can be considered a threat to existing wives who have no influence over this decision because additional wives can result in a decrease in the household income and in the husband's attention. This is particularly important in the event of the death of the husband, as the estate is shared among his children, not necessarily his wives. As we will see in Chap. 5, wives have little say in inheritance and are dependent on their children. Hierarchies are created between senior and junior wives, with the former controlling the family income and household and junior wives being subservient. While polygamy remains extensive[21] in Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger, not all the women respondents had a negative perception of it. Some stated that their own status rose within the household when a new, younger wife arrived, and others commented that the new wife's arrival would lighten their own domestic load.

Nonetheless, polygamy complicates a situation in which women have a lower legal status than men, creating additional inequalities for women. Polygamy may be explained as it can increase the probability of children, is needed for status, for labour and to continue the family lineage; to 'offset the problem of surplus women' (a justification frequently cited by male participants in this research); and to extend the business networks of the

[21] Religious marriages have been legally recognised since the new Family Code was introduced in Mali in 2011 and have the same standing as civil marriages. For the latter, the couple decides if the union will be monogamous or polygamous. If monogamous, a husband cannot take another wife unless the first marriage has been dissolved. For polygamous marriages, the wife must agree and only the man can take more wives, not the women more husbands.

man (Dissa, 2016). Levirate[22] marriages are also widespread. In Mali, the Family Code (art. 280) stipulates that women have the same rights as men to enter civil or religious marriages but nonetheless discriminates against women. For civil marriages, couples have to state whether it will be monogamous or polygamous. If the former, the husband cannot take on more wives unless the first is dissolved or if the wife consents. Men also have the right to marry up to four women (art. 307), although the husbands must treat all wives equally (art. 320). Discriminatory practices also persist in Niger, and attempts to introduce a Family Code have not been successful (Lagoutte, 2014). Marriage is governed by the Civil Code. In Niger, according to this Code (art. 125), both men and women can decide their domicile when unmarried and having reached the age of majority. However, once married, women have to live where their husband decides. Women are particularly affected by divorce (Maiga, 2011). Marriage under customary law is most common, and therefore, repudiation is the most common form of divorce, following which women lose custody of their children and their right to their assets (Lagoutte, 2014). As the three countries are patriarchal and virilocal, once married, brides move to the compounds of their new husbands and are subordinate not only to senior wives but also to mothers-in-law and sisters-in-law and are long considered outsiders. This is in contrast to her children who are immediately assimilated (Guirkinger et al., 2021: 2). In Burkina Faso, as in Mali, the Persons and Family Code (Articles 257 to 262) stipulate that future spouses must give their unconditional consent to place a marriage under the regime of polygamy. In other words, the first wife must give her agreement to there being a second wife. In practice, however, these legal provisions are rarely respected.

Additionally, any assumption that the inequality faced by women in these traditional and mostly patriarchal societies centres around a male-female binary ignores the influence of women on new brides. As Acholonu states (Acholonu, 1995: 28),

> Those who present the notion that the African woman is suppressed and oppressed or is placed in an inferior position to men have failed to realise that in many cases, women are part and parcel of, if not the power behind, the scattered instances of male dominance.

[22] Levirate is the custom according to which a widow should marry a brother of her deceased husband.

Complexities concerning gender inequality continue domestically, with a woman's status also being determined by the sex of her children. Son preference dominates, and having a son is perceived as being economically and socially prestigious (Diamond-Smith et al., 2008). The birth of a son represents the perpetuation of lineage, unlike that of a daughter who will be transferred to her husband's family. As a result, women suffer psychological pressure from the fear of repudiation, and husbands may turn to polygamy to seek a 'replacement' wife to bear the desired male offspring. As one man joked in a focus group discussion in Mali, 'a son is the best, "back of the goal" you could say'.

Violence and Control

Violence, of all types, against women is extensive and persists, evidencing a form of social acceptance. Many of the respondents in this study, men and women alike, agreed that a man could beat his wife, especially 'if she deserved it'. Young women who had been married at a young age and who might not behave might need 'training' to be kept in line. For example, men in one focus group in Mali (RM1M) said: 'the husband is not allowed to hit the wife but if she is doing something wrong according to the man, you can sit her down and sensitise her. Now when sensitisation does not work, you can hit her'.[23]

This was the case regardless of rural or urban location or age. One man in Mali (UM2M)[24] recounted how, 'in the past here, if you married a woman, it would be the woman's father who put a whip in the wedding trousseau so that the man could discipline the woman'. Men are not judged negatively for beating their wives, although respondents in this research made a distinction between 'beating' and 'hitting' or 'tapping'. 'It's a sign of love. I want my wife to be good; when I hit her, she understands that. So, it means you love her.' (RM1Mb). Such social norms about violence by men over women only serve to underpin domestic domination by husbands and the disempowerment of wives.

In Niger, there is no law against violence or domestic violence against women, although perpetrators can be severely sanctioned. In Burkina

[23] All translations of quotes from interviews and focus groups are by the author.

[24] A series of focus groups were conducted in Mali and Niger. They have been coded to ensure the anonymity of participants. A table of the codes, which are referred to throughout the book, is shown in the appendix.

Faso, despite the law on the prevention, repression, and reparation of violence against women and girls and care for victims,[25] violence, including marital rape, is ignored. In Mali, although measures have been taken to prevent violence against women, it persists throughout the country without support or protection services (CEDAW, 2016). Mali has the highest female genital mutilation (FGM) rate worldwide, affecting 82.7% of women aged between 15 and 49 years and 76.4% of girls aged from 0 to 14 years and resulting in health problems, some fatal, for women and girls (CEDAW, 2019). FGM is not covered by any law and is widely practised, particularly in rural areas. It is carried out extensively by traditional practitioners (it is prohibited for official health practitioners), who gain significant financial rewards and status from the practice. FGM is considered a rite of passage for young girls and is widely considered a prerequisite for marriage (Mesplé-Somps, 2017). Although awareness of the topic is increasing, 75.2% of women aged 15 to 49 years are in favour of the practice, and 70% of the population says that they want it to be maintained (CEDAW, 2019). There is a transnational nature to the practice, and women from neighbouring countries where it is banned are sent to Mali to be cut. In Niger, FGM is a criminal offence covered by the Penal Code (art 232.2) (Ministère de la Justice, 2003). Although the parliament passed a law outlawing FGM in Burkina Faso in November 1996, with revisions in 2018 introducing additional sanctions, the practice remains widespread, particularly in rural areas, and is one of the forms of gender-based violence discussed in Chap. 7 with reference to internally displaced persons (IDPs).

Education

Girls' education is significantly affected by marriage, and according to a recent index (one.org, 2019), Niger was third of the ten Toughest Places for a Girl to Get Education, Mali was 6th, and Burkina Faso was 8th. This same report concluded that it is not just a question of money that is the root cause of this situation (Niger, for example, spends over 20% of its domestic income on education but still performs badly). Harmful and

[25] Loi n°061–2015/2015/CNT du 6 septembre 2015 portant prévention, répression et réparation des violences à l'égard des femmes et des filles et prise en charge des victimes [Law n°061–2015/2015/CNT of 6 September 2015 on the prevention, repression, and redress of violence against women and girls and the care of victims].

gendered cultural and social norms perpetuate gender inequality, with girls consistently performing worse than boys in school. In Mali in 2019, 38% of girls completed primary school, and in Niger, only 17% of girls and women (aged between 15 and 24) are literate. According to World Bank data (2021), adult literacy in the population aged over 15 was only 26% for women in Mali and Niger (compared with 46% and 44% for men in the two countries, respectively). The regular absence from school among girls is also caused by inadequate water and sanitation facilities at schools and a lack of gender-segregated latrines, space or hand washing facilities (UNICEF, 2013). Many girls do not attend school during menstruation, a broadly taboo subject that impacts their education. Campaigns are raising awareness of this topic, both among girls who do not receive sufficient information early enough and among boys who tease and mock girls for their stained dresses and their absence; however, much remains to be done.

The cost of education is another factor behind girls stopping their schooling early, particularly among rural populations. Rural communities have primary schools, but to attend secondary schools, pupils invariably need to travel to neighbouring towns, incurring significant transport costs, or they must pay to lodge with family members in other towns. Given the choice, money will be found for boys to pursue their education, while girls will be kept at home because of the important labour force they constitute, helping with domestic chores, caring for younger siblings and providing value respite for their mothers, themselves overburdened with domestic responsibilities. Thus, son preference is again an important factor. Some families also do not send their daughters to school because they are afraid that they will become pregnant and leave school, which is considered a waste of any financial investment (SIGI, 2018). If girls attend school, gendered dynamics emerge at an early age, as empowering girls is perceived as a threat to boys whose disempowerment may result (Heywood & Ivey, 2021a). Education is additionally severely impacted in crisis-affected areas of Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso. In Mali, for example, one-third of the population in 2018 was in conflict-affected areas (UNICEF, 2019). Over 1100 schools had been closed due to insecurity, affecting over 350,000 children. UNICEF (2019) estimates that over 2 million children were not receiving education in 2018 because of insecurity, household poverty, child labour, child marriage, or a lack of local schools. Similarly, in Niger, at the start of 2020, 2.6 million children were out of school, mainly because of the grave insecurity situation (Reliefweb, 2020). In Burkina Faso, in 2020, over 2500 schools had been closed following

armed terrorist group violence affecting 350,000 students (Human Rights Watch, 2020; UNHCR, 2020). Girls are most affected.

The consequences of no, or inadequate, education for women are evident. While gender inequality in primary education is reducing through female enrolment campaigns, this has not extended to secondary education. Illiteracy or low literacy levels mean that women are reliant on other people's interpretations of news and information, particularly husbands and male family members, and leave them vulnerable and uninformed when making critical decisions about their own lives. As we will see throughout this book, radio can fill this gap, providing an essential source of information for women faced with structural inequalities.

Institutional Discrimination

Women in Mali are subject to discriminatory laws regarding their roles and responsibilities both domestically and within society (CEDAW, 2016) and do not have access to the same legal status as men in traditional and customary courts. Concerning employment, despite Mali's ratification of International Labour Conventions No 111 and 100 on women and men's equal rights to employment and pay, which is also reflected in the state's Constitution (Art. 19) (Government of Mali, 1992), in practice, women are discriminated against in the formal economy, receiving lower pay than men (CEDAW, 2016) and having little job security. Women are entitled to 14 weeks of paid maternity leave. The Constitution also stipulates equal rights for men and women to hold public and political office, and on election lists, there is a 30% quota for women candidates and women in the executive (Article No 2015–052). Nonetheless, political participation and engagement among women remain low.

Niger ranks 'very high' for gender discrimination in social institutions; Mali is 'high'; and Burkina Faso is 'medium' (Social Institutions and Gender Index, 2019). In the three countries, men are predominantly the 'heads of households'. Like Mali, Niger ratified the CEDAW (in 1999) but did not ratify the Maputo Agreement (Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa), a treaty on women's rights in Africa written by the African Union. In Mali, a discriminatory Family Code is in place covering public, Islamic and customary law, the last being applied most widely in practice. The Labour Code (Art. 5) does stipulate against discrimination on gender grounds, but Article 109 prohibits women from entering professions that might

compromise their reproductive capacity. Politically, an amendment to the law 2000/08 raised the quota amongst elected candidates from 10% to 15% for both men and women (UNESCO, n.d.) and from 15% to 25% for appointment positions. The law adopted on 6 December raised these quotas again, from 15% to 25% for elective offices and from 25% to 30% for high-level positions in government (Agence Nigérienne de Presse, 2019). However, as in Mali, women's political participation and engagement is widely restricted, although awareness-raising campaigns are having some impact in changing this. In Burkina Faso, women are underrepresented in politics because of a lack of awareness of their rights and of the 30% quota of female candidates imposed by law No. 010–2009/AN of 16 April 2009 on party lists for legislative and local elections (Rouamba & Soré, 2021). The lack of women's political participation is also due to widespread discriminatory attitudes, among men and women alike and particularly in rural areas, that women are not capable of being President nor should they be deputés (SIGI, 2018). Therefore, although important stakeholders in all aspects of daily life, women, in many cases, are disempowered and require more information about their rights and a greater voice in society (Heywood & Ivey, 2021b).

Enabling Environment and Enabling Factors

Radio's role in empowering women is significant. In contrast to empowering women by providing financial resources, equipment or other assets that may provide donors with measurable outcomes, radio can act as a 'knowledge resource' (Heywood, 2020b) by providing information. Broadcasting independent, factual, or awareness-raising information, radio has the capacity to trigger shifts in consciousness among its listeners—both men and women—and shape the manner in which women are perceived in society. By describing women, what they do and their roles in society positively, by not stereotyping them and by not reinforcing negative representations, radio can build self-belief and self-esteem among women and promote a positive image of women and their capabilities among men, the main decision-makers in patriarchal societies.

However, this information must be provided in a manner that is not top-down or that serves to reflect donor desires or the foreign policies of donor countries. Information must build on indigenous cultures with ongoing audience interaction and collaboration to create a space for audiences to promote their own ideas and concepts and to ensure that the

information that audiences receive is not only what they want but is in the format they want, from the people they prefer. By ensuring that audiences can identify with the content of its broadcasts, radio has the capacity to raise awareness and contribute to awakening and reinforcing women's critical consciousness and their ability to acquire self-esteem and self-belief (Kabeer, 1994; Sen, 1997). It allows them to better understand the constraints of their oppression, provides spaces for discussion and self-expression and allows transformative solutions or options to be pursued. The various concepts mentioned above of 'power *within*' (self-esteem), 'power *to*' and 'power *with*' (collection action) must be brought together (Mosedale, 2005; Rowlands, 1997) to empower women and for women to have a voice.

The book investigates the power of information, in this case conveyed by radio, and the power of that very tool to shape communities and identities and, ultimately, to empower. Rather than focusing on sound as a characteristic of radio, it examines radio's ability, as a knowledge resource, to democratise using the attributes that make it accessible to marginalised communities and to give others a 'voice', a theme that permeates the book. From a capability and development perspective (Sen, 1999), 'voice' has been used to address widespread inequalities of representation and is associated with the ability to '*give* a voice' to others. However, as Kunreuther suggests (2014), voice then becomes a possession or even an asset promoted in rhetorical speech as being 'found, had, or raised' (find a voice, have a voice, or raise a voice). This is associated with the problem of who holds the power to 'give' voice and therefore who is subordinate in 'taking' it. This concept of voice is widely featured in the political and development discourses of international bodies such as the UN and international NGOs, but again, it is they who hold the power to give this privilege. Rather than being a tool that is used to 'tick boxes' for development or empowerment purposes, Couldry (2010) stresses the need to treat 'voice as a value' or that 'matters'. He discusses voice in relation to neoliberalism, affirming that 'treating voice as a value means discriminating *against* frameworks of social economic and political organization that deny or undermine voice, such as neoliberalism' (2010: 2). This understanding of 'voice as a value' is similarly applicable to the members, practices and norms in patriarchal systems and the manner in which they can undermine or 'devalue' that voice. Voice therefore cannot be assumed but must be contextualised within a set of sociocultural norms that allow some to be heard and others to be silenced. This book examines these norms

and challenges the patriarchal mediatisation of messages by reflecting on voice as an alternative to prevailing practices. As we will see throughout the book, voice is not only an embodied mode of transmission, but as Kunreuther (2014) states, 'itself ubiquitously mediated through a range of always more pervasive technologies'. Voice emerges on multiple levels, and those encountered and discussed throughout the book are as follows:

- *Mediated voices* that deliver information to give audiences a voice; The voice, in this case, is the message being broadcast to audiences, perhaps awareness-raising information concerning education, health, finances, or how to increase the listener's participation in or engagement with politics, which, in turn, enables the listener to gain information to raise their own voice in their society.
- *Voices within programmes*; These are the voices within the above messages. Messages may recount the experiences of individuals affected by a given message. These can be in the form of interviews, vox pops, testimonies and so on.
- *Voices of producers, gatekeepers, journalists, presenters, and editors;* All of these have a role to play in shaping the production of the radio message but are also shaped by other influences. The quantity, quality, frequency, gender and other attributes of presenters and guests speaking on radio carve out the message. More men than women presenters when talking about women-related issues will influence the output. Similarly, more frequent appearances by women presenters or guests will influence audience reception of a message.
- *Voices in which messages are spoken,* i.e. *languages* and radio as an oral and aural tool, are in close alignment with the importance of orality in African languages.
- *Voices as listeners* (phone-ins); in this case, phone-ins and the associated interactivity offer the audience a space to express their opinions and gain advice. Regarding women-related topics, they can also allow the manner in which gender is co-constructed by callers, experts and hosts to be studied, especially when the host, who is the powerholder in the interactions, is male (Bouhout, 2020).
- *Voices as identities* (in homes); through the intimacy attribute of radio, individuals on air acquire a presence in homes and become a welcome 'friend' (Chignell, 2009).
- *voices as collectives* (women's groups).

- *voices of women journalists.*

Thus, the powerful concept of 'voice' can embody particular qualities through its own attributes, such as register or tone. Voices can convey and represent multiple identities such as class, gender, location, age, and ethnicity (Kunreuther, 2014; Weidman, 2006) and, when brought together, can highlight the plurality of voices needed to help promote democracy. Voice and orality are not a new concept in Africa, particularly in relation to women; one only needs to recall the important role of *griots*[26] and *griottes* as an affirmation of this (Hale, 1994; Mohammed, 2019). Indeed, Nkealah (2016: 72) stresses the importance of orality and oral narratives among women in 'refining and reaffirming the feminist vision for (West) African women'. As Myers (1998: 201) stated, 'in many ways radio is the tangible modern extension of oral tradition'. Women are identified through mediated and mediatised voices on radio in contrast to other platforms, such as television, where they would be visible. However, if a woman is not given the opportunity to speak, their voice—which would normally be recognisable through its gendered qualities—remains silent.

This book investigates how radio, as a knowledge resource, contributes to shaping beliefs, practices, and values towards women with potentially transformational effects. It explores what the mediatisation of voice on radio programmes can signify to audiences and how it can impact their understanding of awareness-raising concepts. These various themes are teased out by examining women-related and general programmes broadcast in Mali, Niger, and Burkina Faso and their impact on audiences and on women's rights and empowerment. It considers these mediation processes (formats, practices, genres and so on) and their influences on representations of individuals, their ways of being and relations with others.

Section Three: Approach to the Book

Methodological Approach

The research in this book draws on several projects conducted since 2017 in Niger, Mali and Burkina Faso examining the radio output of the

[26] A *griot* (*griotte* is the feminine) is a travelling West African storyteller, singer, musician and oral historian. They are repositories of oral tradition and command positions of status in society.

Swiss-based media development organisation Fondation Hirondelle. Data were collected from listeners who had access to the radio studio's programmes via their local community radio.

Participants, all listeners of Studios' partner radios, were selected from predetermined categories: rural or urban, married women, unmarried women and men, thus ensuring representativeness. They were interviewed through focus group discussions (FGDs) organised at a mix of urban and rural community, and commercial radio stations in and outside the respective capitals. By conducting the FGDs at the site of the local radios, we were able to adopt an ethnographic approach with some participant observation. Radio directors would proudly show us around their small stations, the hubs of their communities, and talk us through any newly acquired hardware. They would explain their programmes, the importance of awareness-raising broadcasts, who their sponsors were, and the key role of their volunteer presenters. The significance to the community of these radio stations was striking. Passers-by would loiter, curious about the visit of foreign researchers, but would be welcomed to join. It was evident that radio stations and the sandy yards they were located in were not exclusive spaces but were where people felt at ease and were accustomed to entering. The radio directors and presenters also knew their listeners from the interactive calls they would frequently make. The role of these community radio stations went far beyond just broadcasting programmes. The participants in the study were asked similar questions about their understanding of women's empowerment, their use of radio, their own role and status in society and that of women, principal influences shaping women's lives in the country and how radio could be improved to better shape understandings of women's rights and empowerment. Many of the participants' recommendations for improvements are discussed in the following chapters.

The responses were triangulated with content analyses of radio programmes broadcast by Studio Kalangou, Studio Tamani and Studio Yafa. The content analysis of both the broadcasts and the FGDs formed a key part of the method. All the broadcasts were transcribed from the original French and then coded using NVivo according to negative or positive terms for women, stereotypes, perceptions of women, gender of guests and presenters and airtime given to them, geographical references, dominant themes, representations of roles and positions of women and so on. Upon completion of the content analysis, the FGDs were repeated with the same participants. Participants were questioned on the broadcasts, their opinions on them generally and their styles and contents. The aim

was to determine any changes in perceptions, understanding, or behaviour regarding the themes in the programmes.[27] Eighty FGDs were conducted as baseline and endline investigations before and after a series of women-related programmes—or programmes with a women's perspective on a range of topics such as politics, inheritance, finance and so on—were broadcast by the respective studios. Additional semi-structured interviews were conducted with journalists at each of the studios and other media organisations in the countries, with experts at the Fondation Hirondelle headquarters in Lausanne and with subject experts in Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso. My own positionality within the project must not be ignored. As a white, educated researcher from the Global North, I tried to acknowledge my own implicit and explicit biases and the power relations involved. Initially, due to time and financial restrictions, I conducted interviews myself in French, the working language of the research, with translators where necessary. Whilst it is clear that this would result in biases from both sides (moderator and interviewees), it was also stated that being an 'outsider' allowed interviewees to speak more freely than had a local moderator led the conversations, who might have been in a position of authority, exerting their own power, or been in a position to judge. The limitations of working as a Western researcher on the projects covered by this book in the poorest parts of Africa are discussed by Heywood et al. (2020). It was also necessary to consider social desirability bias, or the 'tendency to say things which place the speaker in a favourable light' (Nederhof, 1985: 264). To discourage participants from giving answers formulated to counter negative evaluation or gain endorsement from the interviewer, the moderators asked neutral questions where possible. Female respondents, possibly disempowered themselves and not used to talking about their own empowerment, also had to be put at ease and allowed to talk freely. We also organised numerous workshops with local experts, media organisations, and women's group, whose opinions and advice on the direction of the research and on questions to be asked was sought.

Aspects of the various projects have been discussed in academic publications (for example, Heywood, 2018, 2020b; Heywood & Harding, 2020, 2021; Heywood & Ivey, 2021a, 2021b; Heywood & Tomlinson, 2019; Yaméogo & Heywood, 2022), reports, conferences and multiple international knowledge exchange workshops and events. Findings from the

[27] For a discussion on the methodology and its limitations, see Heywood et al., (2020).

projects were presented back to those who participated in the research, avoiding scenarios where researchers exploit participants for their data. Participants were thus aware of their contribution to improvements to the very information that was designed for them. The book also draws on data collected from projects funded by ESRC GCRF (ES/T009942/1) on women's empowerment in the Sahel and by Elrha, a London-based humanitarian charity (50505) on using radio to address misinformation about COVID-19 among Internally Displaced Persons in Burkina Faso. Seed corn funding was also provided by the University of Sheffield and by Fondation Hirondelle. Ethics approvals for the many stages in the data collection were granted by the University of Sheffield. As many of the participants had low, or no literary skills, their vulnerability, both emotional and physical, had to be considered from the start. Permissions were obtained from communities to conduct research, and the risks of participation by women in interviews were considered. Safe places were organised for the interviews, away from others who could overhear conversations and then use this information against participants. Advice was sought before and during the projects from experts and communities in the countries especially with regard to the prevailing security situations.

While much has been written on the role of radio in Africa (see sections above), very little has been written on radio and women's empowerment, particularly in these three francophone countries. Moreover, there are very few academic works in English on the role of radio in Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger. This book therefore provides a valuable contribution to the re-emerging field of radio, women's empowerment and development in Africa, and the extensive in-country fieldwork provides critical information about the role and meaning of radio for women in Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger. The book's multi-perspective approach exploring radio industries, content and audiences affords a wide-ranging exploration and provides a comprehensive narrative about radio in the three countries. By comparatively analysing the data from FGDs and interviews with the content analysis of the broadcasts, the book addresses the following questions:

1. How do the three radio studios support and promote women's empowerment in Mali, Niger, and Burkina Faso?
2. How is female dis/empowerment perceived by listeners, radios, international development organisations, and local associations? How does radio's empowerment discourse align with those of audiences, organisations, feminist theories?

3. How do programmes deal with specific issues relating to women's empowerment, and what are audience responses?
4. To what extent could radio further its promotion of women's empowerment or counter the promotion of social norms that disempower women?

Book Layout

This book examines the representation and perception of various key topics broadcast by the radio studios and associated with women's empowerment in the three countries. Rather than repetitively discussing all three countries in each chapter, they instead select those countries to which the topic is of particular relevance, and which can be used to best highlight a specific point. Each chapter first contextualises the corresponding topic in the country/ies and then examines a discrete aspect of radio's provision. The chapters can therefore be read in isolation. The topics covered in the chapters are women's political engagement, women and finances, women and life within marriage, inheritance, women's involvement in radio structures, and radio, women IDPs and trauma.

Following this introduction**, Chap. 2** provides an overview of the basic formats used by Studio Kalangou in Niger and Studio Tamani in Mali by examining the role of radio in women's decision-making approaches and in promoting their participation in politics. It discusses the conceptual understanding of formats, talk, and voices and is important in underpinning analyses not only in subsequent chapters, but it can be applied more generally to radio broadcast analyses. **Chapter 3** focuses on the studios in Niger and Burkina Faso, Studio Kalangou and Studio Yafa, respectively, and looks at women's needs for information on how to set up small businesses, however meagre the income may be; how radio addresses this in specific programmes on this topic; and more broadly, how radio acts as an amplifier for marginalised women by raising women's need for socioeconomic support in broadcasts that do not necessarily focus on women's finances. **Chapter 4** enters the complex domain of marriage and women's role within it and examines the associated structural, cultural and legal entanglements from the perspectives of radio listeners on the one hand and radio on the other. It focuses on radio output broadcast by Studio Tamani in Mali and Studio Kalangou in Niger in 2018–2019 and the associated listener responses and determines the extent to which radio's empowerment discourse aligns with that of the audience and the

effectiveness of the programmes' approaches when dealing with specific issues within marriage. **Chapter 5** examines women and inheritance in Mali in a framework that shifts from the neoliberal development approach we have considered thus far and that highlights the importance of the individual and emphasises the man/woman binary to that of African thought, where the emphasis is on woman as an inextricable part of the community. It returns to the *ubuntu* understanding that 'a self that does not exist in exclusion of the other, but *through* the other' (Coetzee, 2018: 9). **Chapter 6** uses the example of women's listening associations formed in 2018 on the outskirts of Niamey to demonstrate how, as Rennie (2006: 134) states, small-scale, bottom-up solutions can be more effective than general macro policies. By discussing radio's structure, it shows how women, used to being under the domination of men, gain the opportunity to 'reassert and reclaim their capacity to transform their daily lives' (Howley, 2010: 184)

by participating in community action. We also see how shifts in women's critical consciousness occur from perceiving themselves as secondary or incapable to being capable of effecting social change. **Chapter 7** considers how women journalists cover the plight of women IDPs in Burkina Faso and the strategies they have used for the IDP women to gain a voice but also be listened to, all whilst supported by a Western development media (radio) organisation and its donors. It also examines how the studio provides practical information to a specific population. **The concluding chapter** summarises the key discussions of the book and argues that radio, as an important knowledge resource, plays a vital role in promoting women's empowerment and critical consciousness. It emphasises the need to portray women in non-stereotypical ways and must be included in the production and output of broadcasts. It also stresses that men, as society's main decision-makers, must be targeted by seemingly women-related broadcasts. In this way, radio can influence how women perceive topics, how they perceive themselves and, importantly, how society perceives them.

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