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PALGRAVE STUDIES IN COMMUNICATION FOR SOCIAL CHANGE

Radio and Women's Empowerment in Francophone West Africa

Emma Heywood

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Radio and Women's Empowerment in Francophone West Africa

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macmillan

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Acronyms

AGD	Age, Gender, and Diversity
AGR	Activités génératrices de revenu [Income-generating activities]
APAC	Association des Professionnelles Africaines de la Communication
CAR	Central African Republic
CN-RACOM	Coordination Nationale des Radios Communautaires au Niger (National Council of Community Radios of Niger
CSO	Civil society organisation
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
FGD	Focus group discussions
FGM	Female genital mutilation
IDPs	Internally displaced persons
IGA	Income-generating activities
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
MMD	Mata Masu Dubara
MSF	Medicins sans Frontiers
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
OCHA	UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
ORTN	Office de Radiodiffusion et Télévision du Niger (Office of Radio and Television of Niger)
RFI	Radio France International
RTB	Radiodiffusion-Télévision du Burkina
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SHG	Self Help Group

SORAFOM	Société de Radiodiffusion de la France d'Outre-mer (French Broadcasting Corporation of France Overseas)
SOS FEV	Femmes et enfants victimes de violences familiales
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
VDPs	Volunteers for the Defense of the Homeland (VDP, *Volontaires pour la défense de la patrie*)

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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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CHAPTER 2

Radio, Women, and Politics

Women are not going to be handed things on a plate. We're in an occupation where more political will is needed. This is a struggle that is permanent for women.
—Mme Aichatou Mindaoudou—Former Minister of Foreign Affairs Forum 4 June 2018

Introduction

This book starts its contribution to the ongoing discussion surrounding women's empowerment by examining the role of radio in women's decision-making approaches and in promoting their participation in politics. Radio as a communicative tool draws on multiple formats to promote listener engagement and information retention. This chapter discusses the benefits and shortcomings of some of these formats to understand their impact on radio journalists, listeners and production in subsequent chapters. It compares the radio provision of two of the book's three studios, Studio Kalangou in Niger and Studio Tamani in Mali, who both made the decision, as part of their women's empowerment objectives, to broadcast a series of women-related programmes that included programmes on political engagement. This meant providing basic information to listeners about politics in the respective countries and its political leaders, a domain considered to be male-driven and male-oriented; how women could vote and their rights; how to vote in local, departmental, or national elections

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and overcome barriers previously preventing them from doing so; and how to stand as candidates at any political level.[1]

The provision of accurate and accessible information in accessible formats can contribute to achieving goals at a global level, such as SDG5 [2] on gender equality, which provides for the increase in and meaningful participation of women in political decision-making. However, the deeply entrenched patriarchy in these two countries hinders women's political participation, restricting the large majority of women to traditional domestic roles. Inequitable access to education only serves to widen the gap between women and men's opportunities in the political sphere, with poorly educated women having difficulty, according to some respondents, understanding the need to make their voice heard by those in power for their situation to change. The chapter therefore also questions the extent to which radio studios consider cultural contexts that, together with language, guests and format, make programmes more effective and accessible to listeners. It draws primarily on a content analysis, which is outlined in the Introduction, of (a) two series of women-related programmes broadcast, one each, by Studio Kalangou and Studio Tamani, on women's political engagement and (b) FGDs and their reactions to these programmes.

The significance of audiences to news providers is no secret, and while many commercial and community radio stations in Mali and Niger have phone-in shows allowing listeners to participate or provide feedback, these two studios' audiences are not offered this opportunity. [3] It is because of listeners' inability to have a direct voice to speak on broadcasts that radio has been widely considered a one-way medium (Scannell, 1991). However, radio stations cannot disregard audiences without risking losing them altogether. The format and content of broadcasts must be optimised to ensure meaningful and engaging communication with listeners and to allow them to find a form that suits them. Some social interaction with the audience is still needed, as the listener needs to feel special, that they are not just one of an anonymous crowd but that those in the studio are talking to them personally, as an individual, emphasising radio's 'intimate'

[1] In order not to misconstrue the mission of Fondation Hirondelle and to preempt any justifiable questions from the reader, it must be stressed that the aim of Fondation Hirondelle is to provide independent information to listeners, allowing them to be better positioned to make informed decisions. It is not to persuade the listener to one point of view over another.

[2] https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal5

[3] The studios do conduct regular focus groups to gain listener feedback and listeners can also comment on social media platforms, but there are no interactive broadcasts.

feature (Chignell, 2009). Broadcasters cannot assume that they have the listener's full attention, particularly given radio's characteristics as a secondary medium and that listeners can be easily distracted. Listeners are not obliged to listen; it is they, after all, who have chosen to tune in. Broadcasters must therefore work hard, through a variety of formats and content, to attract and maintain listeners' attention and to not lecture but to speak to listeners as equals.

Because radio broadcasts are intentionally communicative, the audience is an intended part of the conversation (Scannell, 1991); they are meant to be listening to the conversation or to the talk being broadcast. They are not eavesdroppers. When guests talk to each other in a studio or when an anchor jokes with a reporter in the field, they are aware that their role is performative and aimed at the absent listener. Broadcasts must be designed to be 'listenable' for their intended audience, and the format and content must therefore ensure that both the message giver (the studio) and the message receiver (the listener) have their information needs met.

This chapter examines the programme formats of the two studios and discusses how they represented women's empowerment with regard to political engagement. It analyses the benefits and shortcomings of the various formats used by the studios to allow various voices to be heard and to promote political participation among women in Niger and Mali. In doing so, it questions how the provision of information can help women make first-order strategic choices (Kabeer, 1999) or decisions on a macro level and whether to engage in politics (Arestoff & Djemai, 2016; Heywood, 2020) while meeting their civic responsibilities and gendered expectations.

Context

Women in Africa have long faced multiple barriers to their political participation, shaped and exacerbated by intersectional power dynamics. From an early age, girls, particularly in rural areas, encounter restricted access to education. The 'official language' (French) is learnt at school, and as many girls do not go to school or drop out early, they are deprived of the opportunity to learn and communicate in the language that is used as the primary medium of official communication. In many instances, women are considered subordinate to men and should follow men's leadership, something that is often justified in part by men's higher levels of education; men are able to read and understand documents and are therefore

considered more capable of representing a community's rights. While this might reflect reality, it avoids the obvious fact that men have greater access to education, creating an uneven playing field. Because of men's dominance over political leadership, women's concerns are marginalised. According to UN Women (2022), 'women's equal participation and leadership in political and public life are essential to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030'.

Village hierarchies have also traditionally privileged men's voices over women's, hindering women's political participation. Not only are women traditionally confined to the private sphere, but they are also subject to a series of laws, whether they are customary, religious, or civil, which are gender discriminatory, particularly with regard to reproductive rights, inheritance, divorce and access to land. Many men justify their social superiority by (mis)interpreting cultural and religious instructions for their convenience and to offset the risks of male disempowerment. Religion, organised or not, can render women powerful but also powerless. On the one hand, oppressive gender ideologies can be perceived as not only being reproduced through religious beliefs and their (mis)interpretations but that women are also expected to perpetuate such values and norms as they fulfil their roles within the home. In these instances, achieving greater gender equality could be but a pipe dream. On the other hand, religion (Islam is the dominant religion in both Mali and Niger) has been used to support women's equality, particularly with regard to politics. Alidou and Alidou (2008: 25) use Adamu's interpretation of the Qur'an to suggest that rather than women being prohibited from participating in contemporary politics because it is contrary to Islam, they are 'not only free to participate in politics but are actually *required* to do so as part of the religious obligation of all Muslims to "enjoin what is right" in the society as a whole'.

This does not suggest, however, that women have been excluded from politics or that they have not expressed the desire to participate (Sanankoua, 2004). They are also increasingly represented in the military, police and national guard (Johnson, 2013), and women play a significant role in promoting peace and security in their communities. In some cultures, for example, Hausa cultures (Alidou & Alidou, 2008), women control their own decision-making and finances. Matriarchal practices, which exist among nomadic communities, must also be considered to avoid homogenising all women as simply 'Nigerien' or 'Malian'. Nonetheless, for a majority of women, society's organisation favours men over women, and women remain excluded from power hierarchies, including politics.

Women and Politics

The Context in Mali

Leading up to independence in March 1960, Malian women had been subjugated to traditional social norms within their communities and to colonial rule. According to the latter, education was the reserve of Malian men, and only gradually would women receive education, and then it would be to act as good wives, using the French model as the benchmark. In the period from the 1950s to post-independence, women were strategic in their political participation, working within the restrictions imposed upon them and supporting associations giving them access to development bureaucracy. In the 1960s, women's role continued to be restricted to the domestic sphere in public discourse, and the emphasis was placed on them having to raise the next generations and ensure their good health, education and morals. There was therefore a clear gender distinction regarding political involvement, and women were sidelined and perceived only as wives and mothers. Women, particularly those on a local level who were involved in politics, represented women's issues and concerns (de Jorio, 1997). A reform in 1962 granted women quality education on an equal footing with men. This then enabled them to later use this education to compete with men for positions in the civil service and in politics (Sanankoua, 2004). By the mid-1970s, the ruling military government opened its doors to women, but this was limited. The National Union of Women of Mali (UNFM) was created in 1978, playing a decisive and prominent role with the wife of the then ruling president becoming the UNFM's president, gaining considerable prominence. By the 1990s, women were being encouraged to increase their political participation. This was a result of administrative decentralisation (Wing, 2008), supported by campaigns by international organisations and NGOs for women to modernise. The international community provided financial aid to promote local government and decentralisation within Mali, but they needed to work in collaboration with local associations to achieve this. Associational norms therefore had to be modified, as international aid was only provided to officially registered groups, not individuals. The ability to gain access to aid through collective participation led to the surge of women's associations (Johnson, 2019). However, I will argue that this also led to the tensions, which form the basis for this chapter, between demands from the international community, which regulates external funding and

encourages increased women's political participation, on the one hand, and cultural norms, on the other, according to which women are perceived as one indivisible part of a large community fulfilling very specific roles. According to legislation in 2005, '10% of public funding is proportionately shared among political parties which have women elected as deputies or municipal councillors 5% of the amount is for female members of the National Assembly and the other 5% for female municipal counsellors' (Government of Mali, Loi N° 05–047/ du 18 Août 2005 Portant Charte Des Partis Politiques) (International IDEA, 2021). Amongst many social norms, Wing (2008) outlines those that prevent public expression by women, particularly in front of men, in case they appeared arrogant or disrespectful. However, as we found in this research, women discuss politics with their husbands and other male relatives in the home, enabling them to influence decisions at least indirectly.

In 2009, there were attempts to introduce a progressive reform of Mali's Civil Code, proposed by President Touré (Soares, 2009). The reforms aimed to expand women's rights and legal protection through the introduction of a higher minimum legal age for girls to marry, secularised marriage, improved property and inheritance rights for women and the removal of clauses enforcing women's obedience to husbands (Deubel & Boyer, 2020). However, this was considered by conservative groups as directly opposing Islam, and the reforms were halted by large-scale demonstrations and protests organised by the High Islamic Council, responding to popular opposition to such changes. A new version, the 2011 Code des personnes et de la famille [Family Code], was approved in 2012, reflecting the shift toward religious conservatism. It removed the automatic right for women to keep their own children if they were widowed; men were legally made the heads of households; and religious marriages became binding (Wing, 2012).

On 30 July 2014, Mali's National Assembly passed a bill to promote measures to increase equal access to elective and nominative offices for women. This became law in 2015, increasing the number of women parliamentarians from 9% in 2009 to nearly 27% in 2016 (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2019). Reversing negative trends over previous years against women's representation, this law requires at least 30% of elected or appointed officials to be women. This is in line with many sub-Saharan African countries, including Niger, as we see below, which adopted gender quotas between 1989 and 2014 (Kang & Tripp, 2018). However, discrepancies between reality and what is written on paper were evidenced on

11th October 2020 when women activists in Mali protested against the non-respect of the legislated quota in the government of transition (International IDEA, 2021). Quotas were nearly reached in the elections of December 2020, with 27% of the seats (33/121) being held by women.

The Context in Niger

Women's visibility in Niger in politics in the years following independence did not differ greatly from that of Mali. Nigerien women had been subject to similar constraints regarding education, and women in colonial times were brought up and educated to be 'good wives'. Post-independence access to education for women broadened, allowing women to become politicised and more active. Women's oppression was structural and was highlighted when General Seyni Kountché dismissed CEDAW (Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women) as not being a priority for Niger (Kang, 2015). Women activists therefore turned in other directions for support and focused their efforts on promoting social protection laws for women. The aim was to protect girls from sexual exploitation and pregnancy, which, in turn, would interrupt or halt their education, further disempowering them (Alidou & Hima, 2021).

Niger was one of many African countries in the 1990s that held National Conferences to trigger a shift from authoritarian rule to multi-party democratic systems. Women, however, were virtually excluded from the preparatory committee for this conference, which resulted in thousands of women protesting for fairer representation. Demonstrations resulted in five additional women being accepted onto the committee (Dunbar & Djibo, 1992). Women's political representation increased in the 1990s, but this was a struggle, and the number of elected posts among them was almost non-existent. Five of 83 parliamentarians in 1993 were women, and this decreased to three in the 1995 elections. In the elections of both 1996 and 1999, only one woman was elected. By the elections in 2020, 26% of the seats (43 of 166) in government were women (International IDEA, 2021).

The quota bill was introduced in 2000 (the quota was for both men and women and was not a reserved seat system that kept seats for women (Kang, 2013)). However, simply having this bill signed was considered insufficient by women activists and women in associations and movements, under the umbrella of CONGAFEN, who mobilised to ensure its enactment. CONGAFEN (the Confederation of Women's NGOs and

Associations of Niger) was created in 1995 as an organisation for women's associations and movements to unify their collective voice and help women use their civil liberties to fight for change and for gender quotas. In 2002, CONGAFEN helped organise a conference to publicise the gender quota law, and it was at this point that the media was operationalised to amplify women's voices. Radio and television were targeted and used as tools to promote their endeavours. Examples include a discussion on radio Saraounia FM entitled 'The Women's Quota Law in Niger: Myth or Reality' in January 2004 (Kang, 2013) and publicised debates broadcast by state media ORTN, highlighting the importance of media over the years in disseminating empowerment messages.

The discussions at the 2002 conference were dedicated to the quota bill and assembled a wide selection of elite women who were mostly middle-class, French-educated and from Niamey, leaving other groups underrepresented and rural women totally absent (Alidou & Alidou, 2008). Some considered that the discussions could be limited to just political and administrative empowerment, effectively serving the interests of this elite group, while others felt that empowerment should extend to a broader agenda of parity and that empowerment should include all levels of society (Alidou & Alidou, 2008). Their efforts were relatively successful, and by 2004, following the introduction of the quotas, the number of women in Parliament increased from 1.2% in 1999 to 12.4% in 2004 (Hamani, 2018; Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2012), and by 2011, 15 women were elected.

The quota law was first amended in 2014, and the initial quotas were increased from 10% to 15% for elective posts and from 15% to 25% for appointed posts. This was in accordance with Article 22 of the Constitution of November 2010, which stipulated that the state shall ensure the elimination of discrimination against women, girls, and persons with disabilities. A further amendment to the quota law on 6 Dec 2019 increased the quotas again, this time from 15% to 25% for elected posts and from 25% to 30% for appointed positions in Niger's administration. This was justified by women's place in society and their numerical weight. This latest amendment occurred after the period under consideration in this chapter. Whilst the quota, as a means to raise political participation amongst women, was welcomed amongst focus group participants, it was not considered sufficient on its own to be effective. It had to be associated with education but mainly financial means: 'Yes, there are women *deputés* who have never been to school. But above all you need the means. There's the

quota. But it's really a question of having the resources' (UMW2Nb), illustrating that the issue extends beyond simple quotas.

The political context for women in the two countries has improved, at least on paper. However, the many societal and economic challenges faced by women must still be considered during the production process of awareness programmes for them to have any effect. How these are represented and formatted plays a key role in ensuring optimal listener attention and retention. It is therefore important for the chapter to now look at the various formats chosen by the two studios, especially as these formats are not only used to convey information on women's political engagement, the topic here, but will be encountered in discussions on topics featured in later chapters.

The Radio Studios' Provision

Studio Kalangou's Provision and Format Decisions

The two radio studios used different approaches in their programmes on women's political engagement: a more traditional one from Studio Kalangou with debates and magazines, and a multi-media 'package' from Studio Tamani incorporating televised radio programmes and 2–3-minute motion design awareness-raising programmes. However, both addressed discrimination and women in politics, both targeted a general, mixed audience, and both were designed as series rather than individual broadcasts. The Studio Tamani series was also funded by EuropeAid, and the aims and objectives were specified to, and approved by, the funder in advance. Both situated the legal status of women in politics within the respective cultural and social contexts of the two countries and addressed the multiple constraints faced by women as they attempt to increase their political participation.

Studio Kalangou broadcast ten 45-minute *Forums*, or debate programmes, on women's political engagement over a 3-month period in 2018, each of which was followed by ten 3-minute *magazine* programmes on the same theme. These were in various languages (French, Hausa, Zarma, Tamashek, and Peulh) and contributed to fulfilling the studio's aim to inform and bring together the different components of society "*au rythme du Niger*".[4] Radio debate programmes, as structured

[4] https://www.hirondelle.org/en/studio-kalangou-niger-en

communication events, are widely used in Africa as a format and bring together opposing experts on a given topic to discuss and exchange opinions, thus reconstructing certain realities about the topic. Radio debates purposefully select guests with contrasting stances and the ability to articulate their viewpoints to ensure an active discussion. Listeners can then make informed decisions based on a balanced and rounded discussion. Radio debates have educational benefits in that they create awareness of different perspectives and demonstrate to listeners that opposing views can exist without threat or intimidation. They provide a space for dialogue, reaching and representing a broad audience and fulfilling one of the main roles of radio, which is to connect societies. Debates therefore play an important role in 'educating the listening public to participate in the democratic process' (Hendy, 2022: 119). The radio debate format is shaped by the topics under discussion, those invited to the programme, the forms of the discussion and the role of the moderator or host.

The overarching theme of Studio Kalangou's ten-programme *Forum* series was largely historical and provided a retrospective look at Nigerien women's involvement in politics on a national level, with a particular focus on the National Conference of Niger, which was held between 29 July and 3 November 1991.[5] Rather than the information being delivered as a lecture or speech that would align with descriptions of radio being a one-way medium, the broadcasts were inspirational and drew on historical achievements and leading figures and groups. They sought, on the one hand, to mobilise women by drawing on the inspiration of women from the past who had risen to power and, on the other hand, to fill knowledge gaps among listeners about the recent history of Nigerien politicians and activists. The themes ranged from an introduction to the historical women's march of 13th May 1991—a day Niger now commemorates annually as the National Day of Nigerien Women—to the participation of women in the National Conference of Niger, the introduction of quota laws, political leadership training for women, and various levels of political involvement (see Table 2.1). To build on progress, Mamata Hamani, 2nd vice president of Niger's Economic Social and Cultural Council, stated in the *Forum* on 15 May 2018, 'the next generation has an urgent need to know what other women did for us in the past to be able to enjoy the privileges and rights we have today'. The *Forums* discussed the need for further

[5] For further information about the National Conference phenomenon that swept Francophone Africa in 1990–91, see Robinson 1994.

Table 2.1 Date and name of Studio Kalangou broadcasts

Date broadcast	*Name of broadcast*
15.05.2018	Women's historic march in Niger 13th May 1991
28.05.2018	Women's participation in the National Conference—role and place
04.06.2018	Membership of CEDAW (August 1999)
12.06.2018	Quota law adopted in June 2000 in Niger—the background and what is still in place 18 years later
18.06.2018	Women's political participation—their place and opportunities in Niger
25.06.2018	Impact of training and coaching women in female leadership
2.07.2018	Women's participation in the first democratic elections in Niger in 1993
09.07.2018	Women in local government—challenges, experiences, and perspectives
16.07.2018	Women in the executive and in political parties—identifying the difficulties
06.08.2018	Women's political participation in Niger—advances and perspectives

efforts to raise women's voices in politics, especially by, and among, the next generation. Younger listeners may be motivated by these discussions, as they would need to understand the history of women's struggles to understand what further progress is needed. However, younger listeners among the FGD respondents were particularly uninspired by talk of politics, with many stating they would never vote, as they simply did not like any of the politicians. Whilst they acknowledged that they had many opportunities to hear about politics or attend meetings, they were not sufficiently interested to participate. This level of apathy was compounded by the general lack of interest in listening to radio among the younger listeners, with many dismissing it as a medium for their parents and grandparents. In combination, these points raise concerns about how to encourage interest in politics among young people and how to adapt radio to be attractive to this audience. As a minimum, it questions the extent to which young people were represented, or targeted, on this series, given that it is about political empowerment and therefore must involve next generations to be effective. While Studio Kalangou aims to broadcast news and information that directly concerns its audience, when audiences are the general population, there is always the risk that certain groups might feel sidelined. Broadcasts must be interesting, relevant to the audience and provide new information. As listeners will have formed listening habits, these habits might be broken if the broadcast content does not meet their expectations or is not considered worthy of their time or energy (Snider, 2005: 14).

A *forum/magazine* combination is widely used by Fondation Hirondelle studios, with the *magazines* providing 'expert interviews, features on specific issues and practical information'. [6] A magazine format, in contrast with the single narrative found in documentaries or debates, is characterised by having several different items often in different styles (interviews, vox pops, testimonies) linked through signposting by a presenter. Variety is key and is used to boost audience attention. Magazines may appear at the 'softer end of the spectrum' (Starkey, 2004: 120), yet they remain a journalistic activity, discussing topical events, perhaps from a new angle or highlighting a particular point, in an accessible manner. Their use also reflects the fact that many listeners cannot or are not prepared to listen to an entire speech programme but will listen to a summary programme. The *magazines* in this case complement the longer debates and provide snapshots of the main points in the *Forum*, which are lengthy and more complex. Whilst many listeners stated they preferred the lively and interactive approach of debates over other formats (news programmes, music), they also said that their attention would drift during complicated discussions or that they would be interrupted or distracted, as radio would often be a dissemination tool playing in the background, highlighting its characteristics as a secondary medium. Although magazines have been criticised for 'dumbing down and trivialising radio' (Hendy, 2007: 81), they are widely used and are a useful way of addressing not only light and entertaining topics but also serious issues.

The *magazines* on Studio Kalangou were useful as they emphasised key information, for example, the significant role of women in the process of canvassing for votes, selecting guests' quotes taken from the longer and more complex forum or selecting brief and effective relevant soundbites from the *Forums* to foreground the power of women working collectively towards empowerment. The studio also used these short *magazines* to highlight the importance of men's participation in women's empowerment. On 16 July 2018, when discussing the impact of training women within parties, the *magazine* repeated a statement from the *Forum* that 'there have been many [male] political leaders who have encouraged their politician wives. And I'm sure that next year it'll be the women who will officially make the pledges that we have to follow' (*Forum*, 16 July 2018).

By using the debate format, Studio Kalangou was able to foreground the gravity and ongoing relevance of women's political engagement—the

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

main message—by including an impressive range of guests. Participants were invited to discuss women's political participation, and the guest list was heavily dominated by women, with only three of the 29 guests over the ten debates being men, which is appropriate given that the aim of the radio programmes was to raise women's empowerment. This may increase women listeners' participation in, or engagement with, politics, which, in turn, may enable the listener to gain information to raise their own voice in their society. However, producing a series of debates about women, in which the mediated voices are predominantly women, might also have the effect of sidelining male listeners (the society's decision-makers) and their potential interest in this topic, as it might be considered to be for women only. The topic itself, not just the broadcasts, may also be sidelined because women's representation in politics may be perceived as a matter that only concerns women, challenging what many of the guests were saying. The majority of guests were past and present politicians or activists in women's associations and movements, and the programmes highlighted how women have managed to achieve advances in politics despite significant obstacles and discrimination. Mme Foumakoye, Mme Mindaoudou, Mme Gambo and Mme Karidjo[7] were good examples of this and would likely inspire listeners through their own accounts, even if it is not clear how listeners could follow in the footsteps of these high-achieving women. Indeed, from the FGD responses, it was evident that many listeners found it difficult to identify with these women. Only three men were invited to be guests on the *Forums*, including a student at the time of the march in 1991, a former coordinator of Alternative FM community radio station in Zinder, central-eastern Niger, and a former national deputy. Because each *Forum* only had four speakers (three guests and the woman moderator), they were each able to speak for a substantial period during the 45-minute programme, allowing their arguments to be developed and the voice of the women they were representing to be heard.

A broad range of organisations were represented in the *Forums*, raising the profile of the organisations but simultaneously giving the programmes status and credibility. These included NGOs such as CARE International, CARE's savings and credit association Mata Masu Dubara, the youth-led

[7] Mme Aïchatou Foumakoye was the Minister for Social Development and Child Protection of Niger. Mme Aïchatou Mindaoudou was Minister for Foreign Affairs from 1999 to 2000 and again from 2001 to 2010, Mme Saley Mariama Gambo was the councillor for Niamey Commune III, representing Lumana the political party, and Mme Moukaïla Aïssata Karidjo.

organisation Femmes, Actions, Développement (ONG FAD), SOS FEVV (Femmes et Victimes de Violence familiale), ADEP L'Espoir; political parties such as MNSD Nassara (National Movement for the Development of Society), PNDS Tarayya, ANDP-Zaman Lahiya; and educational institutions, potentially linking the contents to younger generations. A militaristic and combative choice of words ran through the programmes, reinforcing overarching messages for women to assert their rights, be forceful and participate fully in political life (Heywood, 2020), for example, power, voice, struggle, fight, seize, advance, solidarity, beat, battle, decisive, engaged, won, mobilised, fighters, violently, revolt, determination, revolution, demands, galvanise, militancy, contract, active, imposed, force, efforts, and campaign. These aligned with the message from both the broadcasts and the FGDs that women's lives are a fight in which women are prepared, and able, to participate and that rights are not given, challenging negative or essentialist stereotypes that portray women as passive stay-at-home caregivers. Indeed, women in the programmes, as guests or in the content, were represented positively. One guest, Mamata Hamani, 2nd vice president of Niger's Economic Social and Cultural Council, challenged such stereotypes in the Forum on 2 July 2019 by saying, 'I've always been a fighter, a girl who was almost a boy—a real tomboy! We always used to say, "she's a boy". But no, I'm a girl. I am a girl. I assert myself as a girl first and as a woman second' (*Forum*, 2 July 2018). Explicit challenges to stereotypes such as this can be used to reach out to listeners to challenge their own preconceptions.

A further attribute of the programmes used to stimulate and encourage political participation amongst women in Niger was the combination of female guests in dominant positions, the well-known organisations they represented and the terms in which their actions were portrayed. However, this would only be effective or impactful if the women listeners were already in a position to act, in other words, if they had the requisite education, training and family support. Could ordinary listeners identify with these women politicians from several decades ago and feel able to replicate their actions in a contemporary arena? Many of the guests spoke of women's political engagement in very idealistic terms, far removed from the everyday reality of many women listeners. On 18 June 2018, the guest, Helene Ayika, former journalist at Télé Sahel, the national broadcaster, and former president of APAC-Niger (l'Association des Professionnelles Africaines de la Communication), spoke about activism, declaring it is best 'to join a political party for an ideal'. It is clear, however, that she is

positioning herself (and her listeners) as a leader: 'You have to make it clear in your objectives that what you are doing is to encourage others who have perhaps understood less than you, who have learnt less than you, who have less culture and less training than you and who have come to the party perhaps afterwards.' The fact that the listener, as with all radio broadcasts, is absent has encouraged guests during this debate to disregard, in their conversation, that their performative role is not to produce talk for other experts in the studio but for it to be heard and received by the absent listener (Hutchby, 2005). The number of listeners who could identify with this position may be limited.

Would this *forum/magazine* format allow women to feel encouraged to increase their political participation while also meeting their civic responsibilities and gender expectations? Would it allow for a balance between awareness-raising messages and contextualisation? The *Forum* on 18 July 2018 asked whether political engagement amongst Nigerien women would emancipate or penalise them. It concluded with a contradictory statement that women could be emancipated but only with the support of their husband, challenging assertions that empowerment cannot be bestowed. In this context, the husband unquestionably has the power to determine a woman's level of emancipation. It would be difficult for women to become politically empowered if the main decision maker in their lives refused permission and instead reinforced their traditional domestic role.

However, cultural and societal obstacles were referred to throughout the two broadcast formats, both historically from the time of the march in 1991 and on a more contemporary level alongside political engagement. Domestically, the household environment and extended family members were mentioned as obstacles to women's political engagement, highlighting the position of women within these patriarchal societies and within their own web of relations (Heywood & Ivey, 2021). Childcare, which can prevent women's greater inclusion not only in politics but also in society, was frequently raised. The debate format allowed the guests' conversations to give a voice to many men who were against female political engagement, citing the risk that it may trigger male disempowerment, especially in domains such as politics, which are considered the preserve of men. Guests also spoke of the broader family (in-laws, etc.) and the gendered expectations women face within it: 'It's very difficult for the simple reason that even if the husband has given his consent [to women's political participation], the husband's family won't agree. I've seen that a lot. There

is also travel to the many training sessions to be considered' (*Forum*, 9 July 2018). Through the debate format, the programmes recognise tensions that exist between the scope of political engagement, which is broad and time-consuming, and women's domestic obligations.

However, guests who have been supported by their families, such as Fati Djibo, provide a counterargument to this negativity and may encourage female listeners to ask their husband's or father's permission to engage in politics. 'With my family, I really have no problem with working in the party. I'm an adult, and I'm responsible for my own choices. I'm married and my husband has never stopped me from attending a meeting or doing activities when the party needed me' (*Forum*, 18 June 2018). Despite the programmes focusing on historical events, this contemporary quote attests to the slow pace of change for women within the country. One prevailing solution, again among both programmes and listeners, is collective strength, working together with other women, and ongoing solidarity that supports the ongoing mantra of '*l'Union est force*' [union is strength]. Individual empowerment may be possible within a household regarding second-order choices (Kabeer, 1994), such as when to go to market, but power *with* or collective power, which we will discuss further in Chap. 3, can trigger broader empowerment throughout communities and societies.

The very liveness of the debate format and its unscripted unpredictability carries with it the risk of guests' opinions not fully or consistently supporting the overarching aim of the broadcast. Most radio programmes are broadcast almost as the listeners hear it, and even when parts of a programme are recorded, such as interviews and vox-pops on *magazines*, radio is characterised by the illusion of being live (Scannell, 1991). It is this that makes it attractive to listeners as they feel they are in the same intimate, temporal space as those speaking (Hendy, 2000: 178), preventing them from switching to other media. A strong and experienced moderator is needed to enable editors to regain control over live comments. Solutions or advice are thin on the ground in the *Forums* and guests in fact reinforce negative gender expectations. Rather than stressing the importance of men in contributing to women's empowerment, the moderator allows guests to instead point out that it is the responsibility of women themselves, who remain bound by 'traditional rules' to keep the peace within households rather than jeopardising it by pursuing their own (political) goals: 'We are part of a household and we have to keep the peace in the home' (*Forum*, 2 July 2018). Guests even disparaged attempts made by contemporary women to mobilise: 'Even those who are now

fighting won't persevere' (*Forum*, 2 July 2018), again challenging the objective of a rounded debate. However, simply raising these points and ensuring that men, as the decision-makers, hear them may act as a springboard for future interventions.

The debate format gives the discussions time to drift and allows examples, anecdotes and more off-topic references to be explored in greater depth and tone than other formats. Here, it is made clear that many legal and other changes concerning women and political engagement have been implemented, yet more deep-rooted obstacles face women and the manner in which they are perceived. In other words, however many laws are in place (despite the 'legal arsenal that enshrines the political rights of women' (*Forum*, 6 August 2018)), these remain futile when faced with sociocultural challenges. Many of these comments are passing references to situations well known to listeners and therefore do not require clarification, but through that assumed knowledge, they build on the listener-broadcaster relationship to draw them in. Religion, or more accurately misinterpretations of Islam, for example, is raised as an obstacle to women's political participation: 'Today, you can see that this has changed because since then the marabouts have been talking about women's rights based on what is prescribed by Islamic law. For example, on issues of family rights, there were many approaches that are based neither on modern nor Islamic law. They bully and oppress women' (*Forum*, 2 July 2018). Location (rural/urban) is raised, albeit briefly, as a factor and not sidelined, showing that Studio Kalangou is conscious of not portraying women as a homogeneous group but pays attention to differences throughout the country. The studio thus creates an imagined community of remote listeners, recognising that radio speaks from one place but is heard in many others.

However, it is the manner in which the debate format addresses the obstacles to women's political participation and whether it allows possible solutions to be provided that also interests us here. On occasions, guests are asked about solutions that could increase women's representation and participation in politics, but this forms only a small percentage of the overall questions and answers in the forums, and responses tend to be normative. In the *Forum* on 12 June 2018, Karidjo simply advocates that 'women should organise themselves; women should be united, women should fight too'. Much depends, therefore, on the strength of women, individually and collectively, to change the situation themselves. This struggle is portrayed, with an element of resignation, as an ongoing situation with few changes since the time of the march in 1991. The motivational

information broadcast in the historical programmes encouraging women to mobilise is therefore equally valid for the present day, helping today's listeners identify with the broadcast's contents. There is little focus on efforts to change the attitudes of decision makers (men and extended families) despite this being a root cause of the problem, contradicting the message stated by several guests that men must be made aware of women's issues so that they can contribute to their empowerment: 'we are here as leaders to try as best we can to convince men, to sensitise them so that they accept that their wives do not only go out on election day, but to get them to respect women's rights when there is a right to be respected' (16 June 2018).

Training is discussed in the programmes as a rare example of practical measures that women listeners can take to promote their political engagement. One forward-looking (rather than retrospective) debate (*Forum*, 25 June 2018) focused on training, support and accompanying women through difficulties in their family circumstances, illustrating the freedom of the debate format and how guests can be carefully selected and given a platform to speak, and how other guests can amplify or contradict what has already been said. As the broadcasts were part of a political engagement series, it was possible to dedicate one programme to training. The guests had been involved in training and offered it as a solution; however, the message was not convincing. Instead, the limitations of the training programmes were foregrounded, with guests questioning how much support they, as trainers, could give to women when so much was determined by their family circumstances. Moreover, it was unclear how women could access these programmes. A woman listening to this may be inspired to become politically involved, but she was not given information about whom to contact or how. Again, everything was dependent on the women's own initiative.

Studio Tamani's Provision and Format Decisions

In contrast with Studio Kalangou's provision in Niger, Mali's Studio Tamani adopted a 'package approach' (UP, 2018). Whilst still focusing on women and women's empowerment, Studio Tamani covered a range of topics within its series (schooling; economic empowerment; governance; FGM; domestic violence; violence and slavery in conflict and post-conflict areas; climate change; rural migration; women's role in conflict prevention and resolution; and access to land, inheritance and levirate marriages).

Rather than topics being specifically chosen because they are in the public interest—a key criterion in news programmes and debates—they were determined in agreement with the funder. Among others, women's political engagement was deemed a worthy and essential subject for discussion and awareness-raising in relation to women's empowerment, itself a cornerstone of many international development policies. The funder was therefore influential in the agenda-setting for the overarching series, with the journalistic team keeping their editorial freedom and controlling the content and the format.

The broadcasts were in a variety of formats, allowing similar information to be conveyed differently to attract broad audiences. Using this approach might overcome the challenges of attracting younger listeners faced by the more conventional debate/magazine approach discussed above. Each topic in the series was presented identically as a package of programmes comprising a 45-minute debate programme—*Grand Dialogue*—similar to Studio Kalangou's *Forum*, but in addition to being broadcast on radio, these were filmed and made available on YouTube; six 3-minute portraits of women[8] presenting their experiences of one aspect of the given topic, also available on radio as audio broadcasts and on YouTube [9] as filmed versions; a 2–3-minute educational motion design, providing concise, easy-to-understand facts, rather than opinions, through the use of scripted animations, narrated by a woman with flashes of textual information displayed on the screen, available on YouTube [10] and via Facebook; and a documentary film [11] with interviews of women, elaborating the shorter 'portrait' interviews (13–15 minutes). The format is therefore more complex than the simple *Forum/magazine* format of Studio Kalangou, allowing for many more perspectives to be included from a diversity of guests.

Studio Tamani's programmes (Table 2.2) adopted a contemporary and awareness-raising approach. They used easy and accessible language, in line with the package design's informative approach, broadcast in Bambara not just in French. In the governance and politics programmes, the

[8] For example, see https://www.studiotamani.org/64248-politique-quand-la-prise-de-parole-en-public-handicape-les-femmes

[9] Televised broadcasts for Studio Tamani can be found here: https://www.youtube.com/@StudiotamaniOrg

[10] An example of a motion design can be found here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X3xIxgBMJxI

[11] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L-DBMztVnv0

Table 2.2 Date and name of Studio Tamani broadcasts

Broadcast date	*Broadcast name*
Grand Dialogue	
30/11/2018	Elections: women's access to candidatures and positions of responsibility
Magazines/portraits	
30/10/2018	Women and politics: Mali ranks 168th
01/11/2018	Politics: When speaking in public 'handicaps' women
02/11/2018	Women and politics: 'Difficult to access positions given the socio-cultural constraints'
03/11/2018	Women's access to political office: The advantages of law 052
04/11/2018	Politics: Women suffer from a lack of support from men
05/11/2018	Politics: Women 'victims of betrayal'
Motion design	
29/10/2018	Motion design, in Mali, fewer than 10% of women are elected to political office
Film documentaire	
30/10/2018	Women and politics: Mali ranks 168th

emphasis was on why to vote or become engaged in politics rather than providing the historical background to women's political engagement in the country. Additionally, rather than one topic being broadcast over several weeks relying on listeners to tune in at specific times and retain and build on information from week to week, each topic and all its forms were broadcast and rebroadcast in a concentrated two-week block, encouraging better engagement and thus retention.

A clear benefit of this range of formats is that there is greater flexibility to combine discussions on macroissues, such as the political system, with micro-issues, such as women's daily struggles to engage in politics. The debate, *Grand Dialogue*, as on Studio Kalangou, provided a diversity of perspectives through guests from various backgrounds, ranging from experts from professional backgrounds to those invited because of their lived experiences, to representatives of religious or other associations, and from locations including not only the capital-based Studio Tamani studio but also many on-location, thus allowing a broader range of audiences to identify with the programmes. Whilst it is assumed that talk on radio is voiced in one place and heard elsewhere, broadcasts are designed so that listeners feel co-present with those in the studio, and distant or remote intimacy is reinforced. The debate on politics was recorded in the studio

and discussed elections and women's access to candidacies and positions of responsibility. This 45-minute debate comprised the male presenter; two women, Gnagna Sene, President of the Women's Advisory Council, and Sidibé Aminata Diallo, former minister and presidential candidate in 2007; and two men, Issa Kaou Djim, communication officer of the High Islamic Council, and Moussa Guindo, magistrate and technical adviser to the Ministry for the Promotion of Women, Children and the Family. Thus, an equal balance of perspectives was considered (religious, legal, women's experiences, women's organisations). However, within these patriarchal societies, there was a tendency for women guests to be interrupted by other guests and by the presenter and for their 'talk' or airtime to be shorter than that of men. According to journalists at Studio Tamani, maintaining a balance between genders is complex, as many potential women guests appear reluctant to appear on programmes if they have to speak in French when it is not their first language. Given additional pressures on the freedom of the media, particularly in Mali, according to Studio Tamani's *Grand Dialogue* presenter Mouhamadou Touré, 'it is becoming even more difficult to find female guests, which is a challenge even under normal circumstances'.[12] He also added that once a potential woman guest has turned down an invitation to appear, there is a tendency for her to be sidelined for future selection, highlighting the unconscious gender bias within the studio.

Mouhamadou Touré, the presenter in this broadcast and most of the debates, provided smooth transitions between guests summarising previous statements before asking related questions to the next guest. Despite the apparent balance between guests, the men spoke for 58% of the programme with the Iman, Issa Kaou Djim, alone talking for 24% of the broadcast with lengthy monologues. Women guests might be physically present in the debate but remain silent compared to the vocality of male guests. If women do not speak on radio, they are no longer visible to listeners and are effectively absent even if the theme concerns women's empowerment.

The debate programme was not limited to guests in the studio but cut to carefully chosen vox pops with two men and two women recorded on location and equally divided between positive and negative responses, but the illusion of liveness was maintained. These balanced the opinions of the

[12] https://www.hirondelle.org/en/blog/1614-the-challenge-of-practicing-journalism-in-mali-today-a-report-from-studio-tamani-s-editor-in-chief

in-studio experts and responded to the stereotype-challenging question: 'Are Malian women competent to assume positions of responsibility?' One man feels women could be given more assistance, while the other states that women do have the intellectual capacity to lead the country but that the mentality is not right for the moment. One woman supports a traditional women's role (which may have greater resonance from a woman than from a male speaker, as could be more expected), stating: 'Women are not yet ready to lead the country. I think it is better that they continue to help their husbands in their quest for power. That way we will have a fulfilling family life'. In other words, the greater good of the family is more important than the individual empowerment of some women. The other woman guest appeared resigned to women being tokenistic in politics and not occupying centre stage.

Legal aspects were raised with passing, but unexplained, references to Law 052 of 2015[13] and the need to convince the population to accept it. Whilst there has been a positive evolution in favour of women's equality, Diallo, the former minister and presidential candidate in 2007, seemed accepting of what appears to be meagre progress when presented with the figures by the presenter. 'Any progress is good for us today', she said. An alternative perspective is presented by the Iman, who stands firmly against Western views and practices of quotas being imposed so suddenly, stating that politics and progress should evolve gradually and in line with a country's own culture. Dominating large sections of the debate, the Iman opined that imposing measures from the Global North cannot solve women's equality as simply as that and that deeper changes than at the political level and the use of quotas are needed.[14] He stressed that women's traditional role in the family is not just a question of equality or dis/empowerment but is essential to the smooth running of the household. Women are part of a network of activities, and without that role being fulfilled, there will be consequences for everyone.

> If his wife also works and his children don't have someone who is trained with the necessary moral character to look after them, if you leave them in

[13] Law 052 was adopted by the Malian National Assembly in 2015. It stated that at least 30% of elected or appointed officials must be women.

[14] Progressive Imams are often invited to appear on programmes produced by Fondation Hirondelle's studios with the aim of providing a positive and authoritative stance on women's empowerment.

> the care of the maid and the boys, the consequences will be severe. (Imam, 30 November 2018)

There are also the complex logistics of women's political participation in this conservative society and the challenges to morality that it may bring. Political meetings often continue late into the night, and permission is needed from families and husbands to attend but is often refused. Nonetheless, regardless of these constraints, the message conveyed by the guests in the *Grand Dialogue* focuses on structural complexity; they may promote women's empowerment but only if women themselves are prepared to make it work. 'If they say that political decisions have to be taken at 3am, if you really have the vocation to be in politics, you have to accept it' (Gnagna Sene, President of the Women's Advisory Council, 13 September 2018). Women should find the conviction and strength from within them first, and then they have to persuade and gain the support of the extended family. In other words, the structure will not adapt to women; all the effort, according to this debate, must come from women, not through the creation of an empowering environment.

As on Studio Kalangou, the debate format on Studio Tamani allows tensions to emerge between imposed Western development values through the introduction of quotas, on the one hand, and traditional concepts of development within 'webs of relations' (see Chap. 5) and women's domestic obligations, on the other. Whilst the contrasting opinions during the debate inform listeners and allow them to critically evaluate different perspectives, all guests agree on the complementarity of men and women. As Guindo, magistrate and technical adviser to the Ministry for the Promotion of Women, Children and the Family, says, giving power to women does not mean disempowering others or challenging widespread patriarchal anxieties within society. The Iman takes this further by stating that there must be compromise between men and women, as both parties agreed to certain situations when they got married. His statements, however, made no reference to the practice of child marriage.

The debate format can be aspirational, but women need to identify with the contents rather than simply hearing presentations of success stories without any indication or suggestion of how they could take action or how their own situation could be improved. Solutions are provided but not 'go-to' information for individual listeners. On a macro level, changes to education are raised. The Iman again refers to Western arguments questioning the inclusivity of classical, colonial-based education. According to

him, education as a qualification for positions of responsibility should also mean religious education and therefore includes rural women and not just westernised women. He suggests that, as a long-term solution, conditions should be created for women to be proud of being Malian rather than striving to become Westernised.

Magazines/Portraits
In contrast to Studio Kalangou's traditional *magazine* format, Studio Tamani's offerings are '*portraits*' of individual women. Instead of the expert guests in the debates, the women portrayed in the magazines are more identifiable; they discuss their daily lives and the realities of how women are excluded from political life. Women talk uninterrupted, in contrast to the debate programmes where women are frequently interrupted by both presenter and other guests. Whilst still not able to talk back, the remote listener is now directly included in this conversation rather than overhearing talk during the debates. This format in which women can be anonymised (easier on radio but possible in the filmed version by filming the back of interviewee's heads) allows them to touch on social norms and cultural constraints with specific lived examples. However, the women here are interviewed and portrayed as individuals not within their webs of relations (Heywood & Ivey, 2021), which is at odds with much of the argument presented in the debate. This highlights the complexity and contradictions of women's empowerment, which, in these programmes, individualises women and distances them from the homogeneous approach to women generally within society, where they are considered to be an indivisible part of a whole. Like the debates, the *magazines* present a problem without specific go-to solutions; a counterbalance could be offered by including more feminist groups and thus reinforcing openings for solidarity.

The 13–15-minute documentaries, which also have a televised version, expand on the *portraits* and *magazines* by providing longer exposés of several women and two men, who together reinforce a narrative of cultural subjugation of women and patriarchal barriers. Documentaries can be defined by the depth of their research and engagement with the topic rather than their duration or audience (Smith, 2003). They are 'wholly factual and based on interviews and written records which tell the story of "real life" and where facts and fiction are clearly separated and [have] an important democratic function as it presents ordinary people as superstars; ordinary lives become important. Producers use reality as raw material and

storytelling as the format' (Lindgren, 2011: 38–39). As factual journalistic reports, these documentaries delve into the real lives of women who have been, or wanted to be, in politics in Mali. These short juxtaposed written records are introduced by a female voice and have ambient sound but are not dominated by on-going voice-overs, a feature of documentaries. Thus, by challenging the conventions of this format, the women's voices are core, not in opposition to paternalistic ideologies that might elevate the narrator above the subject (Noske-Turner, 2012). The documentaries have the advantage first over the debate format, as a range of people can be presented who might not be able to debate (for a range of reasons) yet whose experiences make valuable contributions to a topic, and second over the *magazines*, as the longer length allows for greater detail. The televised documentaries and portraits both provide additional contextual information through the images, highlighting one benefit of the visual medium over radio, as the women interviewees are shown in an environment and context that helps situate the issue at hand. The visual content also has the advantage of conveying messaging that has not been expressly articulated by presenters or interviewees.

The final format in the Studio Tamani 'package' is the motion design videos, which is a style of animation. Motion designs, in contrast with other forms of animation that tell stories or have strong narratives, can explain complex or abstract ideas visually, usually with 2D images, which would be difficult to understand in words. Motion designs bring to life still images or texts engaging a broad audience and acting as an education tool. In this case, the 2–3-minute visual motion designs are narrated by a female voice in French with key information in text on the screen to promote understanding and retention. Being in French does exclude much of the studio's target audience who do not have the education to understand francophone programmes. Local language versions would therefore be beneficial to a broader audience. The motion designs are geographically non-specific examples of chosen themes yet with a visual emphasis on rural locations and rural women. Again, women are portrayed as individuals, but the strong verbal message is that they are part of a community that, according to tradition and religion, takes priority. The clear structure of the politics motion design succinctly provides an overview, in 2.45 minutes, of women's political participation in Mali. It outlines Law 052 of 2015 on quotas, details of which were missing from the debate, and situates Mali's progress regarding women's political participation globally. On a map, the text shows percentages on various countries, illustrating that

women's political involvement in Mali was 1% in 1960, but after the introduction of the quotas, it rose to 24%, nearly equalling that in Western Europe. The motion design emphasises that according to the law and international treaties signed by Mali, there is no discrimination in the country yet pitches this against the daily realities women face balancing work and home. Women's own lack of confidence is raised and the fact that their lack of schooling makes them feel they cannot reach high-level decision-making posts. Such obstacles, expressed verbally, are combined with visual images of a young girl faced with having to physically climb impossibly large steps to reach the parliament buildings at the top to achieve her goal. The message is that the introduction of quotas is positive for women's empowerment, reflecting the global north's stance and that of the Western funders, in stark contrast to that of the Iman in the *Grand Dialogue*. Nonetheless, the information in this short format programme is useful and clear. If used as an introduction to the debate programme, it would provide contextual information to listeners first and a framework that guests could then refer to.

Whilst the televised programmes (*film documentaires, motions designs, portraits*) contained within this package, much of which is multilingual with French subtitles, have the obvious benefit of visuals, their audience remains unclear. Interest in its content was high when shown during focus group discussions, but with the exception of one FGD of younger listeners who said they looked at Studio Tamani's page on Facebook to see its televised output, there was a general lack of awareness of the televised material among listeners, caused, in part, by low internet access.

Whilst the aim of the programmes, shown via YouTube and other social media platforms, is raising awareness of the benefits of women's political participation, and whilst there are contrasting perspectives in the broadcasts, particularly in Mali, a dominance of 'imposed Western development values', as the Imam said, prevails through promotion of the quota system. Traditional concepts of development within 'webs of relations', however, are raised, highlighting tensions in comparison with values and goals prioritised by international agreements and legislation and the realities of life in the two countries. More could be made of this visual material, particularly the motion designs that contain factual information and situate the topic clearly within a national and international framework.

Nonetheless, whatever the limitations of the various formats, the programmes broadcast by both Studio Kalangou and Studio Tamani were well received amongst the FGDs. Having listened to the broadcasts, FGD

respondents were able to recall and cite guests on programmes and suggested that the broadcasts had demonstrated that women were '"allowed" to do politics, illustrating a shift in their indoctrinated view of society and its inequalities' (Heywood, 2020: 1356). By interviewing listeners before and after listening to the broadcasts, it was possible to identify changes in audience habits. Some spoke of their ability to discuss politics within their communities more easily and without conversations ending in acrimony. They attributed this to a better understanding of the topic.

> It's really changed women. We've evolved. We come, we listen to the programme, me and you, I'm in such and such a party and you're in another. However, we're still talking. We didn't talk before. Before we used to insult each other, we didn't talk. Now we've got it all figured out. But before, we didn't understand. (RMW3)

The women respondents also stated that they had gained greater awareness and understanding of politics and power structures in place in society from Studio Kalangou's series. As a result of these shifts in their critical consciousness, they now knew of the many possibilities available to them. One said,

> They didn't understand politics, how to do politics, how to get into politics, what to do in politics, what not to do in politics. But after the broadcasts, they said, "Oh yes, that's how it is!" Before, for them, politics meant nothing, but now they've realised that politics can mean a lot of things for women. They want to do politics. (UMW2)

Both formats used by the two studios contributed significantly to strengthened self-belief among female listeners and to shifts in critical consciousness among both female and male listeners, reflected in changes in normative beliefs and expectations.

Conclusion

Radio has the power to instruct, educate and provide wide-ranging information to listeners, allowing them to critically assess content and form opinions. Using a variety of complementary communicative formats and stylistic features, radio broadcasts can provide the audience with additional information, perspectives and succinct summaries of key points, thus

overcoming problems of information being lost through distractions during longer broadcasts. The two studios used different approaches: a debate/magazine format and a 'package' approach, allowing various voices in the studio and representing the absent listener to be heard. However, whilst the combination of formats resulted in better awareness of women's political engagement among the FGD respondents, women listeners were consistently unable to identify both with this topic (women's political engagement) and with many of the debate's expert women guests, who occupy high positions in society. This was compensated for by short *portraits* or *magazines* with individuals, representing communities, talking directly to the interviewer.

The broadcasts discussed in this chapter focused on political engagement by women in a patriarchal society where the risk of male disempowerment is felt strongly, triggering patriarchal anxieties. They questioned whether the provision of information could help women make first-order strategic choices (Kabeer, 1999) or decisions on a macro level and whether to engage in politics (Arestoff & Djemai, 2016; Heywood, 2020) while meeting their civic responsibilities and gendered expectations. Both series situated the legal status of women in politics within the respective cultural and social contexts of the two countries and addressed many of the multiple constraints faced by women as they attempt to increase their political participation. The studios championed women's empowerment by centralising the voices of women in their reporting, contributing to the normalisation of women's issues occupying a place in radio broadcasting.

Whilst boxes were definitely ticked for the funders, programmes were, in the main, targeted at audiences in a contextualised manner and in local languages, making them accessible and listenable and promoting greater retention of the contents, whose purpose, after all, was awareness-raising. Nonetheless, including such contextualisation and referring to cultural practices, often positively, can serve as a form of cultural reproduction, reinforcing the disempowerment of women.

In doing so, it questions how the provision of information can help women make first-order strategic choices (Kabeer, 1999) or decisions on a macro level and whether to engage in politics (Arestoff & Djemai, 2016; Heywood, 2020) while meeting their civic responsibilities and gendered expectations.

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CHAPTER 3

Radio, Women, and Finances

In our case, it's less a question of empowerment more of survival.
—IDP woman, Burkina Faso

Introduction

This chapter provides a contrast with the previous chapter, which focused on women's political engagement and how the provision of information can help women make first-order strategic choices (Kabeer, 1999) or decisions on a macro level (Arestoff & Djemai, 2016; Heywood, 2020). Instead, it shifts within the theoretical framework to discuss second-order choices and women's economic empowerment. These represent everyday choices that women can make without changing or disrupting their daily routine, such as the need expressed by women to start up and run small businesses—selling grain or ices, for example—to buy food for the family, send their children to school, or just survive. These are 'everyday decisions which do not affect the overall outcome of a woman's life' (Kabeer, 1999: 437).

Gaining information from the radio, their main source of information, on how to improve their socioeconomic opportunities was considered essential by listeners, as it would enable women to become empowered, however slightly. In comparison with first-order choices, second-order decisions are more relatable to most women, many of whom have to ask permission to even leave the home, especially as less resistance may be

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encountered from men and families if their own behaviour and attitudes are not challenged. However, as we will see, the context is often so restrictive that setting up small enterprises is not possible, regardless of women's entrepreneurial spirit or evident agency.

To overcome many of these difficulties, women often seek solidarity with other women in similar situations rather than striving for individual empowerment. This aligns with the concept of 'power *with*', or collective power, discussed in the Introduction and in greater detail in Chap. 6. This promotes the development of social and political agency, which in turn can lead to changes in norms and institutions that underlie disempowerment (Eyben et al., 2008; Kabeer, 2012). According to Pereznieto and Taylor (2014), in their study on economic empowerment, 'power *with*' is considered to be the ability to organise with others to enhance economic activity and rights. Working together through collective power strengthens feelings of self-confidence, as the power of a group is greater than that of an individual, which in turn triggers an empowering environment (Batliwala, 2013).

Women's financial independence, however, is not often the subject of radio broadcasts in its own right and is often sidelined by other issues, such as politics or climate change, which are considered more important or more pressing by funding bodies or large development organisations, despite being the subject of SDGs (UNWomen, 2022a). The issue of finance has instead to be threaded through broadcasts on other themes. A major preoccupation of many of the women interviewed here, as a marginalised group, is in turn marginalised in information broadcasts.

The chapter therefore analyses a range of broadcasts, filtered using keywords such as income, finance, income-generating activities, and employment, which raise the topic of women's financial empowerment but are not necessarily dedicated to that theme. The broadcasts were aired by Studio Kalangou and Studio Yafa between 2018 and 2021. Rather than being able to probe listeners about specific programmes, which was the case in the previous chapter, more general questions were posed about the complexities of women's financial empowerment, and this is used here to contribute to a better understanding of their situation. For this chapter, listeners in Niger were interviewed in the FGDs already discussed. In Burkina Faso, because of the insecurity situation and the inability for researchers to access the listeners' locations, they were interviewed online using WhatsApp (Heywood et al., 2022).

The aim of this analysis, conducted as outlined in the Introduction, is to explore how radio treats 'voice as a value that matters' (Couldry, 2010), in other words, who has a voice, who is this voice representing, who is it speaking to and what need is this meeting. As explored in the Introduction, voice cannot be assumed but must be contextualised within a set of socio-cultural norms that allow some to be heard and others to be silenced. The chapter examines how women guests and speakers act as a voice for poverty-struck women in multiple locations and use radio as a platform to appeal to those in power for support or policy changes, thus challenging the patriarchal mediatisation of messages.

The choice of these two studios is fitting because it explores the financial needs of women in Niger, which may resemble those of many women in Mali and Burkina Faso, but it also examines the needs of internally displaced women in Burkina Faso, a specific group of women whose financial situation is an extreme version of those in the other two countries. It illustrates the complexity of broadcasting to audiences where there is a significant divergence in situations, to the extent that it is hard to compare the women and girls in Niger, who might be in a position to use their earned cash to buy make-up or jewellery, with the IDP women in Burkina Faso, who have arrived in often hostile host communities with nothing and little possibility of changing that.

It first provides context for the levels of poverty and money-making opportunities in the two countries. It then examines how FGD listeners, women and men alike, perceive the financial needs of women, how they feel women can earn money, what they would use that money for and whether these aspirations are realisable and, importantly, the extent to which radio, when broadcasting about finance, can act as a tool to make calls for change to those in authority. It then discusses how women radio guests use their time on radio to convey a message regarding women's financial empowerment, who they represent and what information is passed on. It finds that whilst audiences are anxious to find ways to obtain money, guests raise a note of caution, warn against quick fixes and advise to look to the long term.

Context

Both Burkina Faso and Niger are registered among the poorest countries in the world (184th and 189th, respectively, out of 191 (UNDR, 2022)). Agriculture is the main form of livelihood, and poverty is concentrated in

rural areas where in Niger, for example, 94% of the poor live (Backiny-Yetna & McGee, 2015). Discriminatory laws in place prevent women from inheriting land, and they are therefore dependent on male family members and have significantly reduced options for economic empowerment. Again in Niger, according to Law 2004–050 Article 63, inheritance, which is discussed more fully in Chap. 5, is governed by customary law, which states that women cannot inherit land. In Burkina Faso, according to the Swedish Poverty Report (Swedish Embassy, 2021: 11), the 'total labour force in Burkina Faso is 7,6 million out of which female labour make up 44,7%', and 80% of the work force is in the agricultural sector in low-productivity and informal employment. Women are also increasingly forced to provide farm labour to sustain the family, especially if they have become heads of households when male family members are absent and seeking work during extended seasonal migration or have been injured or killed during conflict (Alidou & Hima, 2021). Additionally, there are social perceptions and stereotypes that women are incapable as entrepreneurs, which also hampers their economic progress. In Burkina Faso, for example, just under 20% of the population (and 12% of women) do not consider women capable of managing a business as well as men (OECD Development Centre, 2018). The gender productivity gap is sizeable because of women's childcare and general domestic responsibilities (women and girls (15+) spend 20.4% of their time in unpaid care and domestic work compared with 2.5% spent by men (UNWomen, 2022b)). Their participation in the labour market is therefore severely impacted, resulting in them having to seek flexible, part-time, low-status jobs in the informal sector (Dieterich et al., 2016; Kabeer, 2009). According to the World Bank, 'women-owned businesses are smaller, less capital intensive and are more likely to operate in the informal sector than men-owned businesses' (World Bank , 2019).

Furthermore, poverty can also lead to child marriage (see Chap. 4) to ease financial burdens on families, as bride prices—the payment made by the groom, or his family, to the bride, or her family—can offer some respite from constant deprivation for many poorer households. This, in turn, affects girls' education, as, once married or pregnant, many are forced to withdraw from school. Additionally, many families may not attach great worth to educating girls, as they will be married off to the benefit of the groom's family to perform the roles of wife and mother. Literacy rates among women are low because of the low school completion rates (15.1%) (Save the Children, 2016), which affect women's ability

to secure better-paid employment, further accentuating gender disparities. Polygamy is also common in the Sahel, with a direct link to increased poverty amongst co-wives. In Niger, 80% of enterprises are run by the country's youth (*Magazine* 24 July 2020).

In both countries, women are extensively employed in the informal economy, slightly more so than men (90% and 83%, respectively) (ilo.org, 2018), which increases their vulnerability in times of crisis, such as COVID-19, or personal upheavals, as they are excluded from social protection benefits. Women are reliant on *activités generatrices de revenu (*AGRs) or income-generating activities (IGAs). These can be individual or family undertakings such as selling grain, iced water, or food, and the income supplements household and schooling costs. Activities can be funded collectively through *tontines* or self-help groups (SHGs) (Bruchhaus, 2016). *Tontines* were first created in Niger by CARE International (2017) and were called Matu Masa Dubara (MMD), which can be translated as 'Women on the Move'. Acting as a major driver of women's economic empowerment and boosting financial inclusion, *tontines* were designed as groups of poor rural women contributing small weekly amounts of money to a collective fund to access loans for different purposes (small income-generating activities, special occasions, or celebrations). SHGs are extensive in Burkina Faso (Dah et al., 2020). The NGO Plan International (n.d.), for example, has been creating SHGs for over two decades in Burkina Faso, where it now has 4348 savings groups. Groups of women, similar to CARE's *tontines* in Niger, save collectively and are able to take loans in proportion to the amount they have contributed. We discuss an example of a self-help group, set up at the initiative of this project in Niger, in Chap. 6. The informality of employment empowers women by allowing them to make second-order choices about how to spend their income, giving them the apparent freedom to contribute to the household's income while also maintaining the flexibility to fulfil household and social obligations. However, the money is spent on the children as women are responsible for them (and rarely on themselves), highlighting how empowerment rarely signifies individual empowerment, more an improvement in the family situation to the benefit of all.

The situation in Burkina Faso among IDP women is an extreme version of the already dire and impoverished situation experienced by women in Niger (Action Contre la Faim, 2021). Because of the deteriorating security situation, particularly in the north of the country bordering Niger and Mali, by 2022, there were 1.5 million registered IDPs in Burkina Faso, of

which nearly 80% were women and children under 15 years of age (OCHA, 2022). These women were forced to flee their villages after witnessing massacres and the deaths of family members, resulting in them having to take sole responsibility for the family. They also lost their livelihoods, as they had to leave behind their land and livestock, with over 60% of the IDP population stating that they do not have any type of income (Reliefweb, 2021). Twenty-three percent of women IDPs in 2020 were heads of households (REACH, 2022), which heightens the vulnerability of the household given the patriarchal environment that favours men, especially for resources. The overall situation was exacerbated by COVID-19 and by three other endemics: measles, vaccine-derived polio virus type 2, and hepatitis E. Respondents reported not only a significant increase in food prices as a result of COVID-19 but also a lack of availability of resources because of government COVID-19 restrictions. Sixty percent of women experienced a worsening of their food insecurity (OCHA, 2021; REACH, 2022).

Facing the challenge of new and unfamiliar conditions, IDP women are now often the main providers for their families, travelling long distances to find food, risking sexual violence and/or physical assault. This is accentuated by the reality that IDPs are joining host communities, already experiencing extreme poverty and now having to share their resources (Oxfam, 2020). Social stigma is attached to IDPs, who are often perceived by local host communities not only as a drain on their resources but also as potential agents of violence. The cycle of vulnerability thus continues.

The lack of opportunities for income-generating activities in this context results in negative coping strategies among IDP women, such as survival sex or recruitment into non-state armed groups (Mednick, 2021). Whilst NGO and humanitarian agency campaigns are prioritising (unconditional) cash transfer programmes and income-generating activities, more remains to be done. Awareness programmes are extensive and now identify solutions relevant to a context of humanitarian crisis and conflict. They aim to act not only on the severe economic hardships faced by women IDPs but also on their mental health, enabling them to reduce their dependence on humanitarian aid and to feel they are actors in their own future. Showing the extreme resilience characteristic of all the women interviewed for this research, IDP women stated that they wanted to be independent and find their own solutions, but supporting other findings, they also said they would welcome information programmes (via radio) that would raise awareness among men and society's decision-makers so

that they, the men, would accept changes, however small, to the cultural and traditional norms that govern women's lives.

Women, Small Businesses, and Autonomy

Radio, as a powerful communication tool for a multitude of voices, has the capacity to act as an amplifier for marginalised people's needs, in this case, regarding finance. It can achieve this either directly by broadcasting topic-specific programmes or indirectly through its guests who use radio as a platform to raise issues to policymakers or those in authority even though the topic of the programme may not be about financial empowerment. In both cases, these needs can be represented by women guests in the studio or by women's recorded testimonies as a natural extension of marginalised voices. Women are therefore not only listeners to the messages but also narrating their own experiences. Women guests, many of whom may be activists or lead women's organisations, can act as vehicles through which more vulnerable women in both rural and urban areas gain a voice, thus contributing to reversing the power imbalance and empowering invisible or silenced women.

The radio guests, throughout the chosen programmes, represent women as active, a force to be reckoned with, ready to work and make sacrifices, including personal opportunities, to fight for their families. This resonates with the FGD responses, where income and the fight for survival were dominant themes in all interviews. Information about money and means to obtain it was paramount for the respondents. Whilst the more abstract first-order themes (politics, climate change, etc.) are important and certainly align with many international donor requirements and international development values, women listeners in the FGDs concentrated on immediate choices affecting them on a daily basis, particularly their ability to set up and run *petits commerces* or IGAs and gain a source of income.

This emphasis on daily choices and family survival was reflected in the radio programmes where all references to IGAs would link women's income to the household as a whole: 'many of them contribute to the family budget' (*Forum* 1, September 2020), highlighting that empowerment here does not mean independence from the family but improving everyone's wellbeing (a theme pursued in Chap. 5 on inheritance). This understanding of women's empowerment therefore paradoxically requires women to sacrifice aspirations they might have for their own

independence for the good of the family, highlighting tensions between international development goals and lived realities.

Many examples of women and income-generating activities, which are mentioned in passing in broadcasts on other topics, are positive and discuss how the extra money serves as pocket money rather than as essential for survival. Such references are not necessarily included to inspire listeners (in contrast to the 'calls' mentioned below, which serve a purpose) but may act as a trigger for others to follow suit. On 10 May 2020, in Studio Kalangou's *Actu des Jeunes*, an 8-minute news programme about, for, and by young people, girls talked about selling mangoes and equivalent seasonal fruits to earn sufficient money (£2) to cover their needs, which appears to include uniforms and shoes, make-up and food. They also talk about using their earnings to prepare for Ramadan festivities, and programme guests in the broadcast on 2 May 2020 happily discuss the benefits of running a small business and how it can be particularly profitable during heatwaves when women can sell frozen drinks. Again, this is representative of many female FGD respondents and male respondents' wives or mothers, who ran a *petit commerce* ranging in scale from small activities to the more substantial: 'I'm a food seller', 'I sell rice and buy wine', and 'I do some farming during the season', they said. 'I have a small business selling firewood', one says. 'I sell condiments, biscuits, and mangoes'. Another respondent spoke of her larger-scale activities:

> I have a small business; I am a milk processor. I process local cows' milk at home. I don't have my own cows. I have collectors who bring me milk 45 km from Niamey. I sell milk from home or sometimes in town. People come to my house to buy it. (RMW1N)

Whatever the activity, it was evident that having a small business would give women a level of autonomy and independence from their husbands without challenging the organisational structure of the household. As one female respondent commented:

> With a husband who's got three wives and other children, and you've got your own children, how many days would you have to wait until your husband gets round to giving you something. We need a small business to run our lives. (UNW4Nb)

Start-Up Funds: A Route to Empowerment

Despite the evident versatility and entrepreneurial spirit among the women respondents—women in Africa are more likely to be entrepreneurs than men due to restrictions they face on their ability to be in paid employment—respondents were clear about the many challenges they faced within the community and domestic structure. Some were eager to set up a business and earn but were resigned to the fact that they lacked the necessary funds: 'I look after the home, I don't have a small business. I simply don't have the money to start one. I'd like to, but there isn't any credit. There just aren't any resources'. However, there was no shortage of information: 'yes, there are broadcasts that we listen to. They do interviews for women, broadcasts on working and on *petits commerces*. They're interesting.' Women respondents went on to say that they discuss the possibilities and logistics of setting up businesses at association meetings, but crucial information on how to access start-up money is missing: 'But there's just no money! And that's why we don't do *petits commerces*!' leaving women disempowered, perpetuating a situation of inequity and injustice.

Women experts on radio programmes are, of course, aware of the listeners' plight and use their airtime to call for more substantial financial credit to be given to women, especially as women have proved that they have acquired the necessary skills and experience in running smaller enterprises. This is mentioned several times during one 44-minute broadcast, ultimately appealing for an 'actual partnership with the Ministry, as a national strategy, to work directly with communities so that they can better understand this MMD model and why it is important for these communities to be able to initiate development at a grassroots level' (Aminatou Daouda Hainikoye (Head of CARE's PROMESSE programme in Niger (Promotion of Equality, of Social and Civil Society Equity, 26 June 2018). The experts, speaking on behalf of women and acting as representatives of rural women, also direct their calls to women themselves to fight for increased credit and not rely on money just being given. Calls such as these in broadcasts respond to the main challenge when setting up IGAs, which, as stated above, is the lack of start-up funding. This suggests that some alignment exists amongst the broadcasters' priorities, listener needs and solutions in the form of NGO or state support and cash transfers.

Cash transfer programmes provide assistance to help increase household incomes. Transfers may be conditional or unconditional, the former being contingent upon compliance with a specified set of conditions, such

as school attendance and visits to health clinics. Multiple benefits result from cash transfers, such as reductions in poverty, increased school enrolment, and improved nutrition. There are also spillovers on the local economy to the benefit of non-beneficiary households through increased activity. However, the same non-beneficiary households can be disadvantaged by increased commodity prices, leading to increased food insecurity. During COVID-19, cash transfers were used extensively throughout the world to counter mass income loss, including in Niger and Burkina Faso. Burkina Faso's government, then led by President Roch Kaboré, announced targeted cash transfers in 2020 as part of an overall recovery package to informal fruit and vegetable sellers, particularly women (LeFaso.net, 2020), amounting to 5 billion CFA (£6.5 million). While cash transfers could also be given to households, this could result in an inequitable distribution of the money. A gendered approach could also be selected where the money is given to either men or women, but there is conflicting evidence as to which is more beneficial. Armand et al. (2018) found that men are less likely to spend household transfers on children than women, suggesting that if children are to benefit, the money must be given to mothers. Barry (2007) complemented this stating that NGOs considered women to be better at repaying loans and to be more responsible than men. Barry (2007: 217) goes on to say that 'saving, in Africa, seems to be a very feminine notion: whether in the countryside or in the city, women are more concerned about tomorrow than men'. However, this contradicts work by De Walque et al. (2016), who found that this was not the case in their Burkina Faso RCT study; rather, households would benefit from more investment in livestock, cash crops and improved housing when cash transfers were given to men in households. In Niger, women respondents were consistently in favour of the former opinion:

> There are NGOs that support women with small businesses. That's so that women can run IGAs. We're a poor country. If women don't work as civil servants, they can often go a week without getting 1000 francs [approximately £1.50]. It's not easy. There are NGOs that give small loans—from 6 months to one year with interest. They give you 50,000 francs [approximately £67], and you pay it back over 6 months. With the money, you buy something, you sell it. By selling it, you save the profit somewhere. Over the course of the 6 months, you'll have paid back the money and you'll have also earned something. We don't give the money to our husbands. You see, NGOs do not give credit to men. Because men, when they have money, they

> spend it immediately. They're not creditworthy, they don't pay back the money. They up and leave! But women, they're vulnerable, they can't go anywhere. They're stuck at home. (UMW4Nb)

It is radio's relationships with women's organisations that make radio successful in giving a voice to the voiceless. Women's organisations often comprise many levels, with branches at local, regional, and national levels forming strong networks. Representatives of such organisations who speak on radio broadcasts are and are perceived by listeners and authorities as being reliable sources of both information and experience in their given regions. This only reinforces the authority of their message. For example, the *Magazine*, broadcast by Studio Kalangou on 24 July 2020 at the peak of COVID-19 when the pandemic's effects on women's incomes were significant, was used by the President of the NGO SOS FEV (Femmes et enfants victimes de violences familiales) as a call to the government to support women with small businesses who were facing COVID-19 restrictions. She stated that without help from authorities, their existing vulnerability would only worsen. She called for a real social protection scheme and highlighted two groups of women, ensuring that women were not homogenised: those to be protected and those whose activities needed support to continue, implying that it is not always possible to rely on women's own internal resources and determination.

Some of the activities run by the organisations represented on the programmes align closely with the second-order choices that women have to make on a daily basis. However, to make these choices, the women respondents asserted that training was essential. They stressed that willingness to earn money had to be accompanied by the corresponding financial skill set. The organisations in the broadcasts recognised the need for women to receive this additional training to pursue activities and thus boost their income. Not only that, but the solutions provided would often be to the benefit of society, not just women as individuals, again highlighting the emphasis from local representatives that empowerment is to the benefit of the whole, not the individual. In one case, on 11 October 2018, the *Forum* provided a strong case for supporting and promoting school gardens. The justification is that this will encourage future citizens from a young age to understand that agriculture is necessary and should be perceived positively. Organisations worked with the Ministry for Education. Djibo Hamani Alfari, the director of the NGO 'LIBO', called on the Ministry to act: 'This is the mindset that drove us to go to the Ministry of

Education to see how we could change the mentality of the population so that they would really accept agriculture as an income-generating activity like all the other activities' (18 June 2018).

Radio, therefore, acts as a vehicle for the women guests who give a representational voice to marginalised or isolated groups who might otherwise be unheard. A diversity of women guests is incorporated into the broadcasts: experts from respected and known organisations with the authority to speak and be listened to and people in the regions with direct experience to whom listeners can relate. These include women politicians, presidents of organisations, community leaders and individuals presenting their experiences via testimonies and leads to a non-stereotyped image of women being portrayed both in person and in the broadcast content. This diversity allows personal stories to emerge, highlighting the concept of solidarity, or 'power *with*', such as the example of a *tontine* in Zinder, in the southeast of Niger. However, this is mentioned in passing, and the topic of IGAs and women's financial empowerment returns to its more secondary position in the broadcast. It is, however, supported by testimonies from individual women, which serve to encourage others by example, as they have benefited not only from collectively saved credit but also from solidarity among them. As they said (1 September 2020), 'the most important thing is coming to each other's aid when needed'.

Challenging the Status Quo

While economic empowerment can be defined as promoting individual agency to make 'decisions and influence outcomes regarding livelihoods, productive assets, market opportunities, and public services' (Cheema, 2017: 6), and while this might be beneficial for households through the additional income, it can also challenge the status quo within the household by disempowering men or shifting the power balance, however slightly. The collective power that results as women join forces in their financial endeavours can also come into conflict with the social norms and institutions that maintain women's disempowerment (Eyben et al., 2008; Kabeer, 2012), leading to increased patriarchal anxieties amongst those in power.

Many male respondents supported their wives running *petits commerces* because they brought financial benefits and reduced the onus on men to earn the money. However, not all were in favour of the women leaving the home to run businesses or to join associations, particularly mixed

associations, to gain information. This additional barrier to women's economic empowerment reflects social norms in many patriarchal societies where women are obliged to obtain their husband's permission to start an activity: 'If you don't have permission from the man, you can't do anything. And men can be cruel!' (RMW3N). Many of the male respondents were disparaging about their wives' *petits commerces* and dismissive of the importance attached to them by women, refusing to give them any recognition for their efforts:

Q. You said that your wives do not work. So, according to you, a *petit commerce* is not work?

A. They are activities, it's different. It's work that doesn't lead to a monthly salary. For us, working means leaving home and coming back home. Everything that happens inside is unimportant (RM2N)

This disregard among men for *petits commerces* did not go unnoticed by women respondents who were little short of scathing in their attitude to their husbands and the obstacles they create. Many women were dependent on having equipment such as fridges for their activities (fridges were frequently mentioned as coveted items that were not only a status symbol in a community but also a solution to financial hardship). While male respondents appeared proud of their wives for running a *petit commerce*, once the initial hierarchy in employment status had been established, they were not prepared to provide any support to their wives if it involved their own financial commitment. As one wife commented:

> If you need a fridge to run your business, you'll have to pay for your own electricity. Your husband won't want to pay for electricity so that you can sell your ices. But he'll happily consume your ices and drink your cold water. But he won't help pay for your electricity. Most women, they put in their own meters. (UMW3NB)

The situation becomes even more complex when polygamous households and the resulting inter-family tensions are involved, challenging the concept of power *with*:

> The men don't understand. When the husband takes another wife, she will also use the electricity. And the man won't want to pay for electricity for both his wives. The first wife doesn't want to pay for electricity for her co-

> wife. This creates problems. So she has her own fridge and meter. It's separate from the family's electricity. It's to help the children. She is obliged to make ices and to make frozen sweets. She puts them in her own fridge. (RMW3Nb)

Women radio guests use their voice on radio and articulate the opinions of focus group respondents by widely criticising men's behaviour, something that is supported by the male presenter on the *Forum on* 1 September 2020, who summarises the preceding discussion with 'so, for empowerment, you can't rely on men'. Vociferous responses from women guests confirm this with multiple examples:

> You help in your husband's house. You have needs, you ask your husband for a few coins. The next day you do the same thing, then a third time, you will always be disappointed. But if you have your own business, you can help yourself manage. (*Forum,* 1 September 2020)

"There's no question of sitting back and waiting for everything from one's husband", say these women traders. By carrying out their activities, women can contribute fully to the family's expenses, particularly the cost of the children's education. One mother explained to us: We've got children who study here in Gaya, others in Niamey, in Dosso too. They often call us, "I need 20,000 francs; I need something else.…" If you don't earn anything, how can you help them? (*Forum*, 1 September 2020)

All the focus group respondents, men and women alike, expressed a keen interest in receiving further information on *petits commerces* from radio programmes, despite the abundance of available information from various other sources. Men were especially interested in additional radio broadcasts, as women could use radio to be informed from the home rather than going out to potentially mixed meetings, which might also act as a distraction. However, finding the money to set up a small business was not a guarantee of its success. The downward spiral of poverty within communities meant that success was dependent on others being able to pay for the goods or services. Given that many are in the same impoverished situation, this cannot be assumed:

> I started a small business. It didn't work out, so I stopped. I bought sheets and sold them. And soap. It didn't make money so that's why it didn't work.

> If I gave credit, there were some who didn't pay me back or were late with their payments, I had to give up. (RMW2N)

There are other basic factors that impact the success of small businesses. As one woman said, 'I used to sell ices, but now, given that there's no electricity, I can't do it anymore, I had to give up' (UMW1Nb).

Income as a Disempowering Force

Women guests use the opportunity of being on radio, even when talking about a different topic, to caution against the consequences of IGAs targeting family members. Radio thus becomes an educational tool, with information being disseminated to the population and endorsed by respected experts, who are mostly women, from known organisations, which further underpins their authority. Whilst finances and the opportunity to earn money are fundamental and are uppermost in respondents' minds, the broadcasts and the guests evoke other longer-term concerns, such as girls' education, and warn that these must not be sidelined for immediate gain. On 15 April 2020, the female guest, Issa Osayna Mahmoud, who is responsible for schooling in Bouza, in the Tahoua region in north-western Niger, was vocal in blaming *petits commerces* and the lack of income amongst parents for declining educational attendance. This was confirmed on 22 May 2020 in a programme on education, when it was highlighted how mothers use girls to help with their own *petits commerces* to the detriment of their daughters' education. This leads to a call from the radio guests to authorities and organisations for greater awareness-raising about the importance of girls' education, as, in the long term, this will benefit the nation.

The safety and protection of girls when carrying out income-generating activities is also a common theme in broadcasts. However, two conflicting approaches among guests emerge: one that holds IGAs accountable for putting girls at risk and another that promotes IGAs as an exit strategy for exploited women. On 2 July 2020, the widely discussed topic of dangers to girl hawkers (Perlman et al., 2018; Usman, 2010) was raised both regarding educational achievement and the physical, mental, psychological, and social impact. The radio guests in this broadcast counter any attempts to promote women's economic empowerment and instead prioritise girls' safety by focusing on the harm caused to young girls while working. Replacing their mothers, girls are often obliged to go and sell

goods after they come home from school. They become tired, and their grades drop. Often, women are not permitted to leave the house by their husbands, so they send out their daughters in their stead. In the region discussed in this broadcast, 45% of girls are involved in hawking near transport hubs. This is blamed on—not explained or justified by—the extreme poverty of parents but also their irresponsibility as carers. Once again, men are criticised via radio, this time with the highest sanction because according to Islam, they should be looking after women. In this case, the guests are calling out, on the one hand, to parents for their irresponsibility and blaming women for the danger they are putting their daughters in, leading them even to become raped; on the other hand, they are calling out to financiers who provide start-up money. They provide a practical solution by asking for more funding to be made available for IGAs but on the condition that daughters are not sent out to work.

In contrast, rather than being portrayed as the root cause of harm to women and girls, IGAs are promoted by guests as solutions during broadcasts dedicated to violence and sexual exploitation of women. Calls to those in authority are often made, such as on 23 March 2020 when the programme discussed how IGAs can be used to help provide girls with an escape route from sexual exploitation. Abdoulkarim Issa, the monitoring and evaluation officer and HIV/AIDS specialist from Niger's 'Songes' NGO, said on 9 July 2018:

> We're talking about sex work and reducing it, we're not going to put an end to it, that's not even possible, but in the country, we can do something to reduce it, especially for the new girls who are entering this activity. What I was saying is to develop income-generating activities. We need to encourage vocational training. There are many girls who do nothing, they have no trade. Their parents are poor. Often, they are forced to go down this path, which is very easy. So, if we develop income-generating activities, vocational training for those who have studied, they get diplomas: easy employment! We have to facilitate employment, develop the private sector. By joining up, you'd get a job more easily. So you won't be tempted by someone who will only give you an internship if they can abuse you first [...]. If the country develops vocational training, such as pedicures, manicures, sewing, and hotel management and so on, there are many things that these young girls can achieve. The state can help them, or other partners can help them to get out of this practice.

These calls on radio resonate with those in authority who assert their own actions in this regard yet remain vague about specific help. The Director for the Advancement of Women's Leadership at the Ministry for the Promotion of Women and the Protection of Children in Niger, Tamponé Safiatou, stated: 'Sometimes, to really provide some support to abused women, we do income-generating activities for them, so that they can flourish, so that they can have something to satisfy their needs. There are several projects that really support women' (12 August 2018). When pushed for details, Safiatou mentions an initiative in operation since 2019 called Spotlight that covers the four regions of Tillabéri, Maradi, Tahoua and Zinder, which have the highest levels of violence against women. This is a rare example of additional information being given on the radio studio's broadcasts, but it is not sufficiently specific to help women find these projects. The responsibility, as always, falls on women to find their own way out of a situation.

'The Dead Are Better Off Than Us'

There were many similarities between the situation of women in Niger and the women IDPs in Burkina Faso, but the latter's condition is more extreme. Already traumatised by having to flee their villages and having often witnessed the massacres of family members, they are now in a situation of having no water, food, shelter, or possibility of education for their children. Being able to earn any extra money is essential to cover basics and to support their family. Many stated that they had experience running small businesses in their villages before they were forced to leave. Contrary to their normal routines, they were now helpless and 'waiting, just doing nothing'. They stated that they felt abandoned with no one representing them or fighting for them, and their situation was less a question of empowerment and more a question of survival. They also had to balance tensions with host communities who had difficulty accepting them. Being able to make any choices in this context would empower women. However, positive choices must be offered rather than last-resort choices such as sex for food. Many reported a worsening of their already dire situation when COVID-19 broke out. They experienced significant limitations to their ability to work because of government restrictions; markets were closed, there were restrictions on movement, and celebrations were banned, meaning that basic associated trading activities were halted. Goods did not arrive and therefore could not be resold, and women who did have goods

to sell were not allowed to go out to sell them. Prices rose, shortages prevailed, and hardship worsened, and this was compounded by the fact that, in contrast to many countries in the Global North, Burkina Faso's death and infection rate due to COVID-19 was very low, making IDPs question why they were suffering additional restrictions to prevent the spread of a disease that appeared irrelevant to them.

Whilst many of the programmes broadcast by Studio Yafa in Burkina Faso do report on various aspects of the dire situation of the IDPs and particularly women IDPs in Burkina Faso, there are many examples of the airwaves being used as an opportunity by IDPs, the host community or community leaders to speak directly to those in authority for aid. One such call comes during Studio Yafa's *MiniMag* on 9 March 2020 from a spokeswoman representing one of the 4000 women IDPs entering the region of Kaya each day. Her pleas are not only for increased aid, given that they have no water, no food, and no shelter, but also for opportunities to set up IGAs. She states that they are used to running IGAs in their own villages and have the necessary experience, but that they are now just sitting and waiting idle. In this desperate situation, she says, 'the dead are better off than us'. The mayor of the Kaya commune also uses the broadcasts to call on host communities to continue with their acts of solidarity with IDPs, supporting the fact that there are simply insufficient resources. This call via radio to promote social cohesion continues over the months, yet in October of the following year, 2021, there are still reports of IDPs having difficulties being accepted by host communities and wanting to return to their own villages despite having had to flee terrorism. One 21-year-old IDP talks of difficulties earning money among the host community, as she often has to haggle over her services or finds that some people refuse to pay her at all. These difficulties also affect host communities, with one woman, a restaurant owner, recounting on 2 November 2021 how she takes on young IDP girls to teach them a trade and rebuild their lives. She pays them between 20,000 CFA and 80,000 CFA per month (£25–£100), but 'social services have never given a penny to support me. Yet I pay a salary to each person I house here'.

Positive 'good news' stories of solidarity amongst women are also broadcast on Studio Yafa and provide hope for the future. Collective empowerment can cascade into multiple areas of community and family life, and increased self-awareness and critical consciousness and confidence among women drive a virtuous circle. For example, there are reports of

IDP widows being given training in cooking skills, which in turn can lead to them setting up IGAs and to employment, or small *tontines* that have been created. On 14 September 2021, the *Minimag* discusses the daily routine of women who start work in the fields from 6 a.m., having already done all their household chores. One 24-year-old woman who was seven months pregnant, and had three children already, was supported by other women working alongside her. When she could no longer work or contribute to the *tontine*, the others paid her share on the basis that 'we'll never give up'.

Over the course of 2020–2021, many broadcasts on Studio Yafa focused on COVID-19 and specific programmes targeting IDPs (see, for example, Elrha (2023)). Despite IDPs reporting their ongoing desire to return to their villages, many were resigned to the permanent nature of their displacement. Rather than seeking aid as a temporary measure, the delivery of which had also been seriously hindered because of COVID-19, IDPs (80% of whom are women) wanted information they considered important for their future. This included information on training, how to start small businesses to aid their survival, and better access to education. Towards the end of 2020, and in response to the listeners' information needs, testimonies by IDPs were being broadcast to provide specific examples of how they had succeeded in creating small businesses, addressing needs among listeners for relevant information on topics they considered important for their future in this new environment.

In both Niger and Burkina Faso, while many women would collaborate and gather through associations and self-help groups, there was a prevailing sentiment throughout the interviews that if women were not going to promote their own financial empowerment, no one would help them in any meaningful way. They would do what they could at the household level or even the community level, but beyond that, their social reproductive cycle would continue, and they needed a more powerful voice to represent them individually and collectively. The respondents remained keen to hear radio programmes on how to set up small businesses, as the paltry income would provide tangible improvements to their daily lives, in comparison with the more abstract concepts previously discussed, such as political engagement. In particular, they wanted to hear examples of how other women had not only developed their businesses but also overcome the many everyday hurdles they faced as they strived to make these second-order choices.

Conclusion

Poverty, finances, and daily hardships were dominant themes in discussions with listeners, and these were duly reflected in many radio broadcasts, even if the topic itself did not focus on money or income-generating activities. There was a prevailing need among men and women respondents for information on how women could set up small businesses, however meagre the income may be. Whilst radio is widely perceived as a 'tool for social change—either as a form of political engagement, a tool for empowerment, or an infrastructure serving the voiceless or other social groups' (Milan, 2008: 4), on this topic, specific guidance was not directly provided but rather more general advice or examples of what others were already doing and their difficulties.

Radio does, however, use voice in many ways. It provides a platform for women's representatives to reach out and campaign to authorities and to those in power for support or policy changes for impoverished women with regard to finances. They act as amplifiers for marginalised women, articulating their need for economic support in broadcasts that do not necessarily focus on women's finances, reinforcing links between women from many social backgrounds and many regions. The inclusion of *témoignages* also gives a direct voice to women outside the studio. These voices have different target audiences—men, parents, authorities, women, women's associations and others—recognising the complexity of both women's financial disempowerment and societal restrictions.

That poverty is an everyday situation faced widely by women in these two countries and that IGAs would allow them to make second-order decisions to improve, but not change, the overall outcome of their lives is reflected in the radio programming. Whilst women's ability to be agents of change if they are given a voice or a platform to speak can be significant, it must be negotiated within existing norms and traditions. Focusing on second-order choices in broadcasts might respond to the daily realities of women but risks reinforcing stereotypes of the 'African women' myth (Batliwala & Dhanraj, 2007) or the 'condition' that women are in the home, cooking, and looking after children. The broadcasts recognise the multiple constraints, barriers, and obligations faced by women in their search for financial empowerment, however slight. By threading the theme through broadcasts that focus on other topics, they avoid stereotyping while also not side-lining a vital issue.

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CHAPTER 4

Radio, Women, and Life Within Marriage

What the beard says comes from the braid.
—(Bambara proverb)

Introduction

This chapter 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 a content analysis of 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. The analysed programmes all pivot around marriage, questioning what is considered acceptable in the broadcasts and by the listeners and to what extent (for example, polygamy) and what is not (for example, child marriage). It is important to recall that the radio studios under discussion here are run by a Western-based media development organisation with its own agenda and mission statements, and the programmes are additionally funded by international organisations (UNICEF in this case), which also have a specific agenda. The two radio stations, however, are run in-country by local editors and local teams of journalists whose own social norms might conflict with those of the organisations

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running or funding the studios. Tensions, or misalignments, between discourses can therefore be expected, especially when addressing sensitive marriage-related issues. Between them, Studio Tamani and Studio Kalangou cover the 'life' of marriage from ritual preparations (FGM), marriage contracts (including the rights and wrongs of child marriage), to life within marriage and violence, but they only touch on the end of marriage, possibly attributed to the silence attached to divorce and the sidelining of widows within society. The chapter discusses three aspects that bring together the overarching themes of women's empowerment and radio: the conception of hegemonic masculinities; the use of voice on radio, building on the previous chapter; and radio's use of testimonies to reach audiences. Based on a content analysis of radio broadcasts and listener feedback, the chapter explores the tools and obstacles that radio may face when addressing sensitive marriage-related issues. Whilst the chapter focuses only on Studio Tamani and Studio Kalangou, and they are not necessarily representative of all radio output in the two countries as we have already discussed, the challenges they encounter when covering these topics will be faced by radio generally in Mali, Niger, and Burkina Faso, and the listener feedback can be applied more broadly.

Hegemonic Masculinities and Women's Empowerment

The discussions centre around relations within marriage between women and men within a patriarchal society where hegemonic masculinities as a normative framework prevail. Hegemonic masculinities, as developed by Connell and Messerschmidt (2005: 832), can be defined as follows:

> the pattern of practice (i.e., things done, not just a set of role expectations or an identity) that allowed men's dominance over women to continue […]. It embodied the currently most honored way of being a man, it required all other men to position themselves in relation to it, and it ideologically legitimated the global subordination of women to men.

However, to sustain this hegemony, compliance, if not coercion, is required among social actors (Gramsci, 1957). This compliance and the associated dis/empowerment are examined from various angles, including the subordination of women in marriage and whether this alters dependent on marital status (married/divorced/widowed) and the subordination of women towards men within marriage to other women and female

family members (also discussed in Chap. 5 on inheritance). The complex relationship between empowerment and passivity within marriage is discussed to show that while these two concepts may in some cases be interdependent, a more nuanced approach must be used. In other words, it is possible for one actor to be empowered without another being passive. We have discussed the option of 'power *to*' (Rowlands, 1997: 13) or a 'generative or productive power […] which creates new possibilities and actions without domination' whereby empowerment can occur without disempowering others or creating or reinforcing passivity. However, passivity, whilst defined as a state of acceptance of what happens, without active response or resistance, should not be perceived as the direct opposite of empowerment. Actors can remain empowered, and others can make choices within those constraints; whilst this situation is disempowering to the latter group, it does not mean they are passive. As Kabeer states, 'there is a distinction, therefore, between "passive" forms of agency (action taken when there is little choice), and "active" agency (purposeful behaviour)' (2005: 15). We examine this conception of the passive empowerment of women within marriage in this chapter. This builds on the 'disempowering empowerment' seen in the previous chapter on finances when we saw how gaining the choice and alleged freedom to work was considered the best choice from a poor selection of options for women and only led to them being further burdened. Here, we see that a woman's choice to remain silent or 'passive' within a violent marriage is a conscious decision within an oppressive environment yet can result not necessarily in an improvement to life but not a worsening of it. Therefore, if we invoke the first and second choices of empowerment (Kabeer, 1994) discussed in previous chapters and their relevance here, we can question whether women have a choice with regard to, or within, marriage and/or whether a more subtle choice is made, which is, in fact, to engage passively with events and decisions and thus remain silent but gain some improvement to life.

Empowerment can also not be given freely; there is always a cost. For women to be successfully empowered, a shift in the power relationship must occur, meaning that men, as the oppressor, must recognise that they will inevitably be disadvantaged by any changes in the oppressor/oppressed relationship (Freire, 1968 in Shefner-Rogers et al., 1998: 321). As Bandura (1997: 477) says:

> Those who exercise authority and control do not go around voluntarily granting to others power over resources and entitlements in acts of

> beneficence. A share of benefits and control must be negotiated through concerted effort and, oftentimes, through prolonged struggle.

Alongside the concepts of hegemonic masculinities and women's empowerment, the significant contribution of radio also threads through the chapter. Radio can be used as a platform for women to be represented and heard over space and time, triggering changes in behaviour through persuasion and inclusion. The chapter uses the opportunity to examine how the use of voice, as discussed already, can be an empowering tool. Much has been said about voice—'giving' a voice, being 'heard', etc.—particularly within development circles in relation to marginalised or disempowered communities. However, there are few discussions on the details; maybe it means giving elite women from a particular region the opportunity, sometimes tokenistically, to raise their visibility by speaking at large conferences or the UN. Often, a more significant shake-up of oppressive structures is needed to extend this tokenistic gesture to collectives by creating an empowering environment (Heywood & Ivey, 2021) to allow groups to take (rather than being given) the voice, or at least have a clear representative speaking for them, fighting their corner. We examine radio's technologically mediated and voiced production of marginalised women, noting how voices on this platform are made more powerful in contrast with other media platforms by virtue of the fact that all messages and emotions are distilled into the voice alone, with no other cues, visual or otherwise.

Radio Output and Audience Reception

Being attentive to both the radio output and audience reception allows the chapter to compare the mediated voicing and hearing of women and women's rights. It also considers the dominance of women's voices in broadcasts about women's issues, questioning whether this stereotypes women presenters and guests and whether there is a case for replacing women's voices with men's. To answer this, it asks whether audiences prefer the status quo where women are the trusted mediator of women-related topics and whether this results in men listeners, representing society's decision-makers, feeling sidelined, not engaging, and reinforcing their attitudes towards their relationship with women.

A content analysis of two marriage-related series (28 programmes) from Studio Tamani in Mali and Studio Kalangou in Niger forms the basis

for discussion here. Using a content analysis will allow the findings to be applied more broadly to the current role of radio in the countries. Studio Kalangou discussed child marriage over the course of several weeks in four debate programmes and 13 magazines, and Studio Tamani reported on domestic violence (six broadcasts) and female genital mutilation (FGM) (nine broadcasts), using the varied format of debates, magazines, documentaries and motion designs discussed in Chap. 2. As outlined in the Introduction, 20 listener focus groups in each country debated these topics and marriage more broadly before and after the programmes were broadcast (80 FGDs in total). The listeners were selected from predetermined categories: rural or urban, married women, unmarried women, and men, thus ensuring representativeness, and were interviewed at a mix of urban and rural community, and commercial radio stations in and outside the respective capitals. Respondents were asked to respond to general questions on marriage-related themes and more specifically about the broadcasts in their respective countries.

Cultural tensions between the Global North and South and between cultural norms and legal texts on marital issues are considered and radio broadcasts' approach to these, with a particular focus on *témoignages* as a tool to facilitate listeners' identification and, therefore, engagement with the topic, possibly generating behavioural change.

Listeners' Conception of Empowerment Within Marriage

Focusing purely on official definitions of 'empowerment', be it from academic or grey literature from the Global North and South or from institutions such as the UN, would obviously be one-sided and limiting. Top-down imposed definitions exclude understandings of this term formulated by the very people who are at the centre of empowerment projects, serving only to perpetuate the subordination and oppression of women. By interrogating listeners' perceptions, their understanding of empowerment becomes clearer, particularly regarding marriage and self-perceptions within it, the position of, and relationships between, men and women, perceptions of each group vis-a-vis each other, generational differences and repercussions when one party crosses the demarcation line. For example, what are the perceptions of women in triggering violence or solving violence? Are these perceptions polarised? What are men and

women's definitions of equality within marriage, or is it a question of complementarity?[1] As the audience is an integral part of radio broadcasting, understanding its interpretation of key terms and practices is essential. Listener feedback from the FGDs was therefore used to provide the following additional contextual information on marriage and empowerment.

Simply asking how listeners would translate '*autonomisation*' into local languages was illuminating. Empowerment was translated into French as '*autonomisation*' during the FGDs, yet it was clear that, with every translation, the definition and therefore understanding of the term would change. Empowerment in English has its root in 'power', while the French term *autonomisation* suggests independence and individual agency (Biewener & Bacqué, 2015). Young unmarried women respondents in Mali clearly linked the concept of empowerment to independence, providing the Bambara word *kanassirmourola* [independence]. They interpreted independence as being from men, being 'free' psychologically and financially, and having freedom of expression. Using various terms such as *musokakalléréta*, *musokayéréta*, and *katsémuso (muso* meaning woman, *kalléréta* meaning to take charge and *kayéréta* meaning to take care of), empowerment was translated as the woman takes care of herself or takes charge. As one respondent clarified, 'it means helping oneself first and then helping one's children and family too'. To be independent, you had to work as this would provide financial independence: '*Autonomisation* means, first of all, that the woman has to work. And work is what pays. But if you depend on your husband, you are not autonomous'. However, they clarified that work would only be beneficial if it led to self-development, and this was more important in the long term than just the money, which would mostly go to the family in any case. The role had to be transformative and allow them to gain self-respect. This was associated with the on-going narrative linking empowerment and education. Many, especially younger, women preferred the French term '*émancipée*' or emancipated or liberated. For them, this goes beyond *autonomisation* and includes not only independence from men, but greater agency, greater respect of that agency, and recognition of a woman's training and education. It reflects a 'modern' woman, but still within an African context moving away from the 'normative, linear and ethnocentric vision of development imposed on the continent' (Bajoit Guy, cited in Barry, 2007). Education and training for

[1] More detailed analysis of listeners' understanding of empowerment on a broader range of topics and its alignment with radio output in Niger can be found in Heywood (2020).

all women, and not just young girls, was perceived as vital for empowerment—not just a right—and formed the basis for any life improvements. It was also apparent that a lack of education should not impede progress. Listeners confirmed that the lack of education affected all of society but that a divide existed between women with education and those without and, therefore, with and without the associated opportunities.

Men and women had different understandings of other associated terms. Many of the men were reluctant, even embarrassed, to acknowledge, for example, the concept of 'obedience' in their marriage, instead linking it to 'mutual respect'. In this instance, they justified women's subordination by giving examples of when wives would also tell them what to do within the household and that each person had specific roles in the family. They suggested that life within marriage was a two-way arrangement: women must bring up and educate the children and also must keep their husbands on the right track.

> For education, even the wife can educate her husband. If she sees that her husband is on the wrong track, she can channel her husband and then put him back on the right track. There are husbands who are not good. Women are really complementary. There are men who don't understand and who put the woman down, they think they are superior, whereas in everyday life, in a home, it is mutual aid that must be there. The man must help the woman, the woman must help the man. We have to help each other. (UM1M)

The stereotypical image of women as natural peacemakers, or the voice of reason, prevails. It is in this role that society allows her some authority, but this does not result in individual enrichment; rather, it benefits the household. Similarly, it is they whom husbands consult when unsure. One woman recounted how the General Assembly in Mali was often suspended overnight as 'la nuit vous porte conseil' [the night brings you advice] and 'le meilleur conseil se trouve sur l'oreiller' [the best advice is found on the pillow], explaining that these suspensions allowed men to consult women, be they wives or mothers. The same expression 'la nuit pour conseil' [the night for advice] is also used when men are embroiled in heated discussions with other men and they say this, meaning they will go and talk the problem through with their wives overnight. This then led the respondent to mention the Bambara proverb, 'Ce que dit la barbe vient de la tresse' [what the beard says comes from the braid], highlighting the power of

women behind men and the respect men may give them.[2] However, as other respondents commented, it can mean that women carry all the responsibility but are not allowed to have the power.

Returning to definitions of obedience, as could be imagined, women's opinions contrasted sharply with those of the men. They made it clear that there was a difference between what marriage should be and what it was in reality.

> Here, to obey means being ready to do anything for him. Ready to do anything for the man. While the man must also do everything for his wife. Whatever the woman has to do for the man, the man also has to do for his wife. But here, we are considered slaves. The woman is put at the disposal of the man whenever he wants, as much as he wants. (UMW1Mb)

Many younger married women challenged this, saying that things have changed and that the most important thing for women to escape their oppression was communication:

> No. That's not how it is anymore. There is mutual respect. But to say 'obey", we're not in the old days … In a sense, it's accepting something from the other. It's a compromise. You have to have a compromise and then I think the basis of all this is communication. We have to talk to each other. We have to communicate. (RUMW3)

From the confidence of their current single status but with second-hand experience of marriage via their extended families, the young women mocked the naivety of questions concerning empowerment once married, adamant that independence, or empowerment, would no longer be possible. In other words, *autonomisation* defined by them as independence had a generational but also status meaning to this group and suggested continuing pre-marriage life as they currently knew it and avoiding 'leaving yourself to the mercy of men' (UUMW1M).

Q: Can you be empowered or independent if you are married?
A: Not in our country. If you are married, you have no choice. You have to stay in the family. But when you are not married, you have time. You can go and do business; you can go and do work to earn money. But when you're married, you're deprived … when you're married,

[2] http://bamada.net/promotion-feminine-au-mali-un-voyage-dans-lhistoire

> it's over. In our country, even if you work, it's on your man's orders. In any case, if your husband doesn't agree, you don't work. Even if you are a civil servant. (UUMW1M)

They did, however, go on to state that their own 'more empowered' pre-marriage lives were also restricted and that they were reliant on their father's permission to go out, work or mix. They also translated *autonomisation* as 'freedom' [liberté]: 'Whether it's freedom of expression or any other form of freedom, but that you are a free and independent woman. That's empowerment in my opinion' (UUMW1M). The main hindrances to empowerment for these young women were marriage and the ensuing children: 'Once married, you have to fight even more to become empowered. Not just for yourself but for your children too.' They also mentioned male siblings, many of whom were fearful that giving women too much power would be disadvantageous to men, suggesting that male empowerment and associated patriarchal anxieties are entrenched at an early age and that women, as the family's educators, are complicit in this process.

Once married, women's understanding of empowerment shifts, adding an additional layer of complexity and helping to explain how difficult broadcasting meaningfully to a general audience on this topic can be. Empowerment no longer means individualised independence because the family unit will always take priority, and married women perform a central role in it. There are therefore no single beneficiaries of empowerment among married women. Instead, they suggested that it meant the 'freedom' to be able to work to gain financial independence to support themselves and their children. There was no suggestion from the women that this work would replace their existing onerous household obligations or that the latter would be shared with husbands. Without such structural changes, this form of empowerment can only disempower women by having more to do. The choice is not an empowering one: either work more to the point of exhaustion but be able to use the money to improve the household's wellbeing, or not work and therefore not be able to provide for one's children.

There was little disagreement among the women respondents that men, in the majority, felt superior and that women had to accede to their demands, be it with regard to caring for children and husband, going out of the home or sex. The idea of being able to refuse sex to one's husband was shocking to the younger married women. An audible gasp came from one recently married young woman as she imagined the repercussions of

ever turning her husband down, even if it were late at night or if she felt ill, reflecting widely indoctrinated societal norms. 'Normally, it is the woman herself who asks the man if he needs her before going to bed. You have been told to do this ever since school. And before you get married, mothers repeat it…' (UMW1M). If a wife disagrees and an argument remains unsolved as marital relations occur, the resulting offspring will not be 'béni' [blessed] as it would not result from a contented union. Women are therefore taught to submit and be acquiescent, despite another young married woman stating that depriving women of this agency to refuse sex was 'a form of violence because often you don't want to, you're tired. The husband comes and says, "You have to do this, this is why you're here, religion demands that you do this" so you're obliged' (UUMW1M).

Just as women are not a homogenous group, contradictions among men regarding their own expectations of their role and position were common. Male respondents had their own understanding of empowerment. Hegemonic masculinities—a discourse that legitimises men's dominant position in society and justifies the subordination of women (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005) and therefore their disempowerment—was justified by many of the male respondents through their conception of 'complementarity' rather than competition, where men are the central figure and the 'breadwinner' and women are the carers and homemakers. Shifting the power balance in favour of women would alter the husband-wife relationship and was used frequently as an excuse to prevent women from working:

> As for empowerment, when men leave the home and women leave it as well as men, who will be left in the family to educate and raise the children? Not everyone can leave. There has to be at least someone in the family. I go out to earn the money for the condiments and the necessities for the family. If I go out and the wife goes out to do the same, then we are still the ones taking care of the family's needs, not the women. What women earn is their concern. It is up to them to solve this, not the men. (UM2M)

This concept of complementarity rather than competition between men and women was a strong theme in the focus group discussions, with men believing it and women resigned to it. Empowerment was perceived as being a Western concept that was difficult to relate to or implement within Malian or Nigerien society.

Q: Do you think that gender equality is more of a concept, a notion that comes from the West, from where we come from?

A: There are two ways of answering that. First, it came from the West. Second, it is a concept that is performed mostly in the workplace. When you are in the workplace, you are equal, but at home, there is no equality between men and women. It is the man who is the king. Whatever the man decides, the woman does. (UUMW2N)

Empowerment within a Malian or Nigerien context would therefore have to be shoehorned into existing social norms rather than becoming a substitute for them: 'marriage requires patience, mutual respect and friendship within the performance of traditional gender roles' (Rebhun, 1999 in Brzezinska, 2021: 261). This is important when looking at radio broadcasts, as social norms are the immovable framework within which debates are conducted with little scope for change.

'Empowerment' therefore had generational conceptions, with younger respondents' definitions aligning more with individualised development definitions than older married women and men, where women are understood within the family (Biewener & Bacqué, 2015; Mama, 2011) and beneficiaries of women's empowerment would be the household.

Whose Voice?

The two studios in this case—Studio Kalangou in Niger and Studio Tamani in Mali—both produced a series of programmes directly related to marriage in 2018–2019. Studio Tamani's programmes focused on domestic violence and female genital mutation (FGM) and were in the formats described previously (debates, magazines, portraits, motion designs). Studio Kalangou's series, comprising 45-minute debates and 3-minute magazine programmes, focused on child marriage covering a range of topics from child marriage and Islam, means of recourse, health risks, the legal framework, the role of the police, education, NGO involvement and traditional practices. In both series, the radio studios broadcast awareness-raising information, yet a fine line existed between providing information enabling listeners to make their own informed decisions and providing direct advice and advocacy. In this case, radio was used as a vehicle to articulate and disseminate narratives held by, sometimes opposing, experts, listeners, vox pops and associations. According to Fondation Hirondelle's

website, empowerment through radio, unintentionally, suggests a top-down approach through the phrase '*giving* voice' to women.[3] However, do the programmes *give*, or do the women *take* that voice and, given the multilingual and multicultural context of the two countries and the above-mentioned interpretations of empowerment, to what extent do the programmes reflect the intersecting oppressions associated with child marriage, domestic violence and FGM? Whatever the case, the studios face an enormous challenge in balancing these taboo topics in their radio programmes. They must combine 'spoken' and 'heard' voices, the styles used, and the very diverse audience to whom they broadcast, representing a range of cultures, religions, and political positions. The following content analysis of the broadcasts helps answer this.

Studio Kalangou's series was funded by UNICEF, whose own agenda aligns with the UN SDG5, target 5:3: 'Eliminate [by 2030] all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage, and female genital mutilation'. UNICEF's (2019) key partners are regional political structures, governments, civil society organisations and communities, and development partners. Whilst this approach draws directly on a development definition of empowerment, by addressing the underlying conditions that sustain child marriage, a feature of Studio Kalangou's programmes here, and by calling for specific laws to protect girls' rights, the UNICEF-funded series broadcast by Studio Kalangou still raised the voice of women and responded to the listeners' own definitions of empowerment. Studio Kalangou's empowerment discourse also aligned with that of the audience. The programmes did not undermine or attack prevailing social norms but rather targeted persuasion, inclusiveness, and 'light touch' encouragement with relatable examples to inform their audience. Women were represented by studio experts during debates and lay women in the magazines.

The complex issue of voice and intervention, or time on air speaking, on radio programmes is important when discussing women's empowerment. This is wide-ranging and concerns not only the voice of the person heard on radio (in-studio guest, presenter, rural vox pop, etc.) but also whose voice they are representing (members of associations, rural or urban communities, specific age groups, and even donors or the radio studio, for example) and who they are reaching (women, men decision makers, policymakers). Tension exists between the number of guests invited to

[3] https://www.hirondelle.org/fr/donner-voix-femmes

programmes and the amount they are permitted to speak. In this Studio Kalangou series on child marriage (17 programmes), for example, there are more women than men participants (57% women, 43% men), which could be justified by the subject matter of the broadcasts. However, 'talk' by men (presenters and guests) was proportionately greater than their number of appearances (54% men vs 46% women). Regarding just guests invited on to the various shows, the number of male participants was 34% against 41% women, yet this was inverted for their corresponding airtime (41% for men and 23% for women). This increase in talk by male presenters and guests is at the expense of female guests, whose coverage time is significantly reduced in comparison with their appearance percentage. Therefore, when on air, men gain more airtime, intentionally or not.

That men gain more airtime than women, regardless of their physical number in the studio or in the field, is even more important when discussing radio; women, if they are not talking, are effectively silenced because of the lack of their visual presence. The number of women on 'women-related' programmes, in other words, programmes whose themes could focus on women's lives, issues or perspectives, could also suggest that the topics under discussion only concern women. However, if men should be involved in women-related discussions to trigger societal change, then a greater male presence in such programmes would reinforce their essential role in empowering women. This would require either the presence of progressive men in the debates prepared to challenge prevailing normative hegemonic masculinities or a strong counterpart to a man who was challenging his own disempowerment. However, a male presence on radio could lead to even more male talk, reinforcing acceptance of the prevailing self-perpetuating male dominance (see Spender, 1985).

Focus group respondents were generally in agreement with this and held clear opinions on women's voices on radio. One focus group discussion with unmarried women respondents in Mali ended in great hilarity after they reflected that there were definitely more men than women on the radio and that women did not tend to cover men's subjects, but then they did not appear able to define what a 'man's subject' was. Men agreed that women were, and should be, the principal voices in discussions on taboo subjects related to sex and sexual health and on women-related themes generally: sexual health, contraception, childcare, family, etc. As a result, women access a voice via radio to act as leaders in public debate in ways that are respected by both women and men. Both unmarried and married women respondents confirmed, having listened to the broadcasts,

that women trust broadcasting in women's voices, as women are the best advocates for other women in regard to their victimisation and oppression: 'Women talk a lot on the radio. Especially about the difficulties they face. Violence against women and girls. Women discuss this a lot on the radio' (RUMW3Mb). Both radio studios recognised this by including women in their broadcasting on women-related themes.

All the respondents, men and women alike, agreed that men's voices are also important when broadcasting about women's empowerment, particularly if they support it. The inclusion of more men who have been involved in female empowerment may enable other men to identify with the broadcasts, underpinning the message that female empowerment does not just concern women. Male voices have an accepted space on radio programmes broadcast on general themes, and including them, as standard practice, in women-related programmes will not only raise the profile of these potentially taboo topics but also normalise them.

Témoignages: A Radio Tool to Promote Message Retention

Understanding the idea of the 'voice' of guests in the studio is not problematic, even with a discrepancy between those of women and men and their corresponding airtimes. Usually, these guests were clearly introduced, and it was made known whom or what they represented. However, to avoid relying on debates with potentially unrelatable guests talking on abstract issues even if they were useful in broadcasting a plurality of women among women, Studio Kalangou and Studio Tamani used *témoignages*, also widely known as exemplars or testimonies, as a stylistic feature. These proved effective as they were recalled by listeners during focus groups (see Heywood, 2020) and, by being remembered, reinforced the message being broadcast. *Témoignages* are a particularly useful radio tool and are short spoken statements or accounts widely used in the child marriage magazines and in the FGM magazines but also by other Fondation Hirondelle studios and are received by audiences as being clear and relatable. One respondent said:

> All the approaches, all the styles. The main thing is that what is said is accessible to everyone. The questions are not so technical that we can't follow them. It's early marriage after all—we're talking about age, the damage it does, none of that is too technical. (RM1N)

They bring together broad but intimate publics linking expert urban women on the one hand and poor rural and invisible women on the other, thus making the connection between different groups of women (and men) geographically, culturally and educationally. *Témoignages* provide a case illustration to exemplify an underlying problem presented in general statements containing base-rate information (Brosius & Bathelt, 1994; Lefevere et al., 2012). In other words, they present individual experiences to clarify and exemplify societal problems. They are secondary in their information-conveying role, as they serve only to support general statements, but they provide episodic insights that contrast with the representative overview in the main information, be it news or debates. They can also explain information in general statements that may be difficult to comprehend. Listeners therefore do not have to systematically examine or research the main information because a clarifying example is provided in the *témoignages*. Their vividness is high and, as a result, can evoke a higher level of interest from the listener. However, listeners may go on to generalise information heard in *témoignages*, considering it to be typical of all people concerned by this issue. They then may assume that this information is applicable to all of society rather than just that one individual presenting their testimony (Brosius & Bathelt, 1994).

In contrast to the debates between high-level experts during the longer broadcasts, the *témoignages* allow a reversal of power by taking the voice and airtime from distance experts and instead giving it, via the mic, to non-expert lay women. In this case, the women are allowed to 'speak back' to both the radio and its experts and to the listener. Mare (2013: 31) refers to this term in relation to how listeners can use social media to 'speak back' to radio. It is a useful term here, as it describes the imagined two-way relationship of the listener with their radio. By making their lived experiences known via their testimony on this trusted medium, the speaker, who is also a listener, gains the confidence to talk as if to a best friend, allowing the intimacy to continue. The virtual listener-radio closeness is thus further reinforced, overcoming the geographic physical separation, and this feeling generated by mediated information is without necessarily noticing the existence of media (Lee, 2004).

The *témoignages* in this Studio Kalangou child marriage series recount the specific experiences of girls who have been married as children or have fought against it. These range from testimonies from a girl who wants to wait until 23 to marry, to the story of a child marriage dispute that was resolved easily, to the example of a teacher who intervenes and prevents

some marriages and then alerts the *chef de canton*, who is able to stop others. A clear illustration of female agency was given by 'Nafissa' (22 October 2018), who refused child marriage because she was aware of the associated risks and took action to remain at school:

> I was not happy about the announcement of the marriage because I was still going to school. I always preferred school to avoid the consequences of early marriage like the problems that arise during childbirth. I informed my boyfriend who in turn went to my father [to say] that I don't want to get married now.

This message was further reinforced by the testimony of her father, which extended the relevance of the series to male listeners. Enabling the father to have a voice is a clear example of how male support for female empowerment can be incorporated into radio broadcasts. The positive impact of these *témoignages* was noted during the second round of focus groups in Niger, when not only were they accurately and systematically recalled by many respondents, but so were the messages they contained. Listeners recalled many of the témoignages in the child marriage series and the messages they contained, such as laws against child marriage, information on legal documents, what to do, or to whom to turn if in a similar situation. They also spoke in detail about the consequences of child marriage, a marked shift from the more abstract information they provided during the first focus group discussions. Many of these improvements in awareness had been triggered by the broadcasts:

> It was really the programmes that helped us understand the content. For early marriage, that meant that the damage this practice does to children since it can lead to early pregnancies, and there are children who drop out of school. So, the information has really got through. (UM1N)

> I've learnt some new things because before, I didn't have much information, but with the involvement of everyone, because in the programmes there are lots of people who intervene, not just one person, and everyone tells their own story, or their view according to the experiences they've had. […] It's become clearer—the consequences of early marriage and for the victims too. (RM2N)

Two such examples of audience recall, underpinning the role and relevance of radio as an information source, were the story of a young girl who

was married at a very early age and who suffered from incontinence after giving birth and the story of a girl who was forced to marry but told her teacher that she wanted to stay at school. Studio Kalangou's inclusive approach of widening the range of voices to include men's testimonies led to a broad appreciation among listeners that the subject had been approached both seriously and holistically and had targeted all sectors of the population. It also undermined the normative ideals to which men should strive. Thus, by disempowering men through the suggestion that they could relinquish some of their masculine obligations, they also become empowered. The prevailing discourse was one of education, motivation, and raising awareness. Once the facts had been presented, the overarching tone was not to attribute blame to the population but to provide clear information regarding child marriage and the law, to find and offer solutions by naming organisations and giving examples, to raise awareness about the situation and to focus on the need for dialogue. In other words, by stressing empowerment through education, the series encouraged the audience to listen rather than become antagonised or feel accused.

Studio Tamani used *témoignages* extensively in their broadcasts on domestic violence and FGM. They were used as stand-alone statements in magazines, inserted in debates and as part of the *films documentaires*. These first-person testimonies from survivors helped to raise awareness and reduce the stigma attached to domestic violence by adding that 'component of enjoyment involved in listening to other people's stories' (Milan, 2008: 31).

The programmes on these topics, particularly domestic violence, revealed forms of power beyond the above-mentioned hegemonic masculinities, which rely on common consent, and discussed male dominance achieved by force, coercion or domestic violence (Brzezinska, 2021; Groes-Green, 2009). As with child marriage and its consequences (fistulas, etc.), domestic violence within marriage and FGM are taboo topics in this society yet are simultaneously widely acknowledged. Problems culturally are resolved by elders in communities or by families which does not align with much of the information on radio on the law or appeals to turn to the authorities.

One documentary, for example, includes a powerful anonymous *témoignage* of a woman who fled an abusive and violent husband with the help of her brothers:

> In Mali, it is the woman who is always blamed when there are problems in the couple. The man is never held responsible. I was ashamed. I was afraid to leave him because of the way others looked at me and the pressure of society. I had resigned myself to dying in this marriage if I had to. (30 October 2018)

Because this account is spoken by the woman herself rather than been relayed second-hand by a journalist, it allows the speaker's voice to be both expressed and heard directly without significant management of the content or intonation. The *témoignage* therefore helps listeners to identify with the speaker and hear an example of a successful and realistic exit strategy that they too could implement. However, 'go-to' information remains vague, with little direct information on the various services and associations to which victims could turn for support when faced with abusive situations. This increases the burden on women to be either problem solvers or to make the passive, empowering choice to remain silent, which in many cases will only lead to further disempowerment (1 August 2019).

The FGM series by Studio Tamani comprises six *magazines* each with *témoignages*, but none from survivors, which concurs with a statement from one advocacy campaigner on the *Grand Dialogue* that she would never be able to persuade victims to give their testimonies on this topic on radio. The testimonies are from former traditional cutters, or circumcisers, and from awareness campaigners, each of whom look back on a time when FGM was performed as an 'ancestral rite' as part of a large ceremony with just one cutter, with no medical knowledge and shared equipment. Girls would be cut at the age of 15 and married four months later. It was part of the marital process:

> I remember that when we were young, we used to give out information about the dates of excision by beating the tom-tom. The parents would then send their children to the cutter. We would bring the girls together by organising a big ceremony for the excised. Once it was done, they would all stay together in a room where a woman elder would counsel them. [When I was excised], none of us had any problems. There were about twenty of us. In our beliefs, excision was said to reduce the sexual impulses of girls. It was also a way to control the virginity of girls before their marriage. It is a matter of honour for the parents. (Studio Tamani *Magazine*, 10 February 2019)

Studio Tamani used the frequent *témoignages* to highlight the consequences of FGM that were not necessarily known or fully understood:

> We cannot talk about all the consequences of excision in one day. There are deaths, tetanus, difficulty urinating, hepatitis B, and AIDS because 20 girls can be cut with the same knife. So, if one of them is infected, the others can be contaminated. Some people tell me that I had a lot of money and that's why I gave up cutting. But this isn't true. It's because I have seen the consequences. Some girls have been cut twice, because the first one wasn't successful. And often the girls suffer, but they are ashamed to talk about it with their parents. They also face difficulties getting pregnant or giving birth. Some ancestral practices have to be abandoned. (*Grand Dialogue*, 4 January 2018)

The *témoignages* underline the significant differences between previous and current practices, with babies under 40 days old now being cut. Previously, there were few cutters; now, it is perceived as a good money-making opportunity ('today, a baby girl is cut after 2 or 3 days. It is no longer a tradition, it's become a business' (*Grand Dialogue*, 4 January 2018)), especially as there is no law against this practice in Mali.

The women campaigners in the testimonies use the opportunity of being on radio to reach out to men as decision-makers. They reveal their own challenges not only in gaining permission from their husbands to campaign but also in persuading them to pay the fuel for them to do so. The women had to work hard to make husbands understand the consequences of FGM for women. Then, they must raise awareness among other women's husbands:

> I invite men to join us in this struggle. Even if it is practised less and less, our wish is that it will stop for good. The support of men would counterbalance the demands of some mothers-in-law and sisters-in-law who push for the practice. (*Grand Dialogue*, 9 February 2019)

> We're aware that men are not very interested in this subject. That's why we target women first, asking them to pass the message on to their husbands. […] I ask men to understand our approach. As the head of the family, they can influence women's thinking and keep them healthy. Women, on their side, should not agree to having their daughters cut just to imitate others. (*Grand Dialogue*, 13 February 2019)

Both of these examples highlight how campaigners recognise the importance of radio as an information tool by purposefully using the space afforded to them via the *magazines* and their *témoignages* to target men as

the head of the family. Few other sources of information have such a reach, especially as programmes are broadcast in multiple national languages. The testimonies underline the conception of empowerment within marriage and complementarity—in this case, it is a case of cooperation rather than competition—to eradicate FGM. They also foreground the role of women in perpetuating this harmful and dangerous practice, providing a clear example of Freire's conscientization (1996), or the process of developing a critical awareness of one's social reality through reflection and action. The campaigners advise women to not just copy what others are doing but to take action based on informed decisions, as this triggers the process of changing reality. Given that, as Freire says, we all acquire social myths that have a dominant tendency, and acquiring and internalising the awareness-raising information from these FGM campaigners would be a critical process of discovering and understanding real problems and needs.

Asymmetry Within Marriage and Passive Empowerment

Whilst the broadcasts appeared well received by the listeners and seemed to fulfil radio's role as an information provider and knowledge resource (Heywood, 2020), context must always be considered; radio guests may support pre-existing attitudes, behaviours and levels of awareness, reinforcing cultural and societal norms rather than promoting an empowering environment. Certain misalignment emerges, for example, between the empowerment discourse of the audiences and that of experts in Studio Tamani's debates. In one example on 2 August 2019, the debate on domestic violence supported distinct power relations in the family, with the man being portrayed as the central figure and women being subservient. It was not clear how women listeners acquired a voice in this debate or how their quest for empowerment was represented. Promoting the voice, not just the presence, of women on radio could mean giving a voice to invisible women throughout the country. In this case, the programme centred on a discussion, moderated by the male presenter, between Oumou Diarra, a well-known female radio broadcaster in Mali, and Moussa Traoré, a male spokesperson for village chiefs in Ségou, a large town 150 miles northeast of Bamako, Mali's capital. Pursuing the idea that hegemony relies on common consent and is sustained and reinforced discursively (Brzezinska, 2021), Diarra advocated that women take an

active role in their marriages to avoid domestic violence and take marriage seriously before committing, seeking ways to improve their interpersonal relations, which included submitting to their husbands and the authority of their mothers-in-law. Moussa Traoré advocated a misogynist stance affirming that feminism is a Western import and that women can only reduce violence by obeying and submitting to their husbands. Neither voice provided a perspective advocating the protection of women from violence from a legal or health standpoint. While Diarra called on men to reduce violence, the main advice presented to women suffering from domestic violence was to submit to the patriarchal authority of the husband: 'It's the man who is the head of the family, you are in his house. He's the one who feeds you'. In other words, rather than supporting development concepts of women's empowerment or listeners' definition that empowerment means a lack of dependence on men, this 45-minute discussion legitimises men's dominant position in society and justifies the subordination of women (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). If such debates target both men and women listeners, the narrative will serve not to empower women and definitely not disempower men or redress the balance. It reinforces rather than undermines the asymmetry within marriage that focus groups mentioned as being a fundamental cause of women's disempowerment and serves to underpin a hegemonic ideal of manhood. The debate did not address domestic violence and its emotional impact on women but diverted attention to women's own behaviour and responsibility, attributing blame to them.

Radio and the Elephant in the Room

At very few points in the two studios' broadcasting did the various voices discuss divorce as an option, despite it seemingly being a possible way out of a violent marriage. Women respondents reported that divorce was a major source of fear and shame and a major barrier to women's empowerment. Both unmarried and married women were visibly alarmed by the thought of their marriage ending in divorce, suggesting that divorce was perceived as a problem rather than a solution for women in their empowerment. Many said they would prefer to suffer in silence rather than undergo social shame and resultant financial hardship. The taboo surrounding this topic extended beyond the married couple, and decisions on divorcing, even if raised following domestic violence, are made on an extended family level, highlighting not only women's disempowered

position in patriarchal communities but also that other women in the family (sisters-/mothers-in-law) perpetuate this disempowerment by upholding, rather than challenging, social conventions. Young unmarried respondents frequently recounted that families would pressurise their daughters to return to their abusive husbands rather than have the marriage fail: 'Even if a woman decided to go to court to address her problems, her mother would not allow her to do so' (RUMW3M).

The studios, like all other radio stations in Mali and Niger, therefore face an enormous challenge balancing taboo topics in their radio programmes, the voices who are spoken and heard, the styles used, and the very diverse audience to whom they broadcast and the range of cultures, religions and political positions they represent. This was raised by one respondent in Mali in relation to gender-based violence, which is a culturally sensitive issue in different parts of the country. He rang the studio questioning the manner in which a women guest had spoken about gender-based violence and how it could be poorly received in his region. He wanted the studio to consider how specific topics were covered to prevent listeners from being emotionally affected (RM2M).

Radio broadcasting on a national scale in Mali and Niger faces different responses across diverse and heterogeneous regions, especially on culturally and socially sensitive issues of child marriage, FGM and domestic violence. Nonetheless, radio is thought to be a powerful communicative tool (Gatua et al., 2010) for raising awareness, and as the men in an urban focus group stated (UM1Mb), many of these taboo topics have ignorance as their root cause.

Conclusion

By viewing empowerment through the lens of marriage, the chapter has been able to focus on various aspects: the definitions of empowerment among listeners whose opinions must not be sidelined, as they are the very target of empowerment campaigns; the voices used by radio for certain topics with the inevitable risk of stereotyping; hegemonic masculinities as a pattern of practice; and the use of testimonies as a tool to convey important awareness-raising information to listeners. Whilst the chapter focuses only on Studio Tamani, and they are not necessarily representative of all radio output in the two countries, the same challenges they encounter will be faced by radio generally. The concept of promoting women's empowerment is complicated by the need to include so many perspectives in the

life cycle of an on-air empowerment campaign. This means considering funders whose end goal may differ from that of the studio production team (development versus cultural definitions of empowerment), the voices to be used and represented during broadcasts, and the styles to be used for maximum effect.

While hegemonic masculinities, based on gender inequality, prevail in the two countries, these remain normative. Many male respondents suggested that changes in mentalities leading to greater empowerment for women would in fact relieve them of the need to live up to society's expectations for men and of the potential for violence against women that results from frustrations and difficulties in meeting these expectations. These men on the lower levels of the dominant patriarchy stated that increased awareness via radio and broader acknowledgement and examples of accepted practices that empower women would be welcomed.

Women's voices on radio are preferred and trusted when disseminating women-related information, both as experts and as laypeople during testimonies. Respondents also agreed that men's voices should also be included in broadcasts on women's empowerment to encourage men to identify with the topic and their own involvement. While women should not only be given a voice on radio when it relates to women's issues, if radio is to be a tool for women's empowerment, the voices of women themselves must be prioritised. Diverse voices of women must also be included in general broadcasting to support women's empowerment. However, gender discrimination is more than a structural issue; within that structure, women face disempowering choices that can be deceptive to development practitioners who advocate 'choice' as the ultimate goal to empower women. Radio broadcasts should be designed such that women, to become empowered, are made to question perceptions and dominant social myths. However, centring women within empowerment campaigns can wrongly suggest to development practitioners and policymakers that changes triggering women's empowerment can only be achieved by women (Khader, 2018).

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CHAPTER 5

Radio, Women, and Inheritance

Inheritance is part of how our society controls women.
—Woman respondent

Introduction

On the death of their husband, depending on the type of their marriage, many women have no entitlement to an inheritance. Instead, according to certain cultures, they are considered part of the estate themselves and are married to the deceased's younger brothers through the levirate system, and the inheritance returns to the man's family or goes to the (male) children. The woman can be left disempowered or can experience a significant downward shift in her socio-economic status. This chapter examines representations of women and inheritance in Mali by radio on one hand, and by its audiences on the other, and the extent to which, and how, the broadcasts raise awareness and promote women's human rights and empowerment, not only among the women who are only too aware of the difficulties they face but also among men and extended family members who hold power over the women. It uses a framework that repositions itself from the neo-liberal 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

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other, but *through* the other' (Coetzee, 2018: 9). The chapter does not essentialise the discussion by developing a development versus African thought binary. Rather, it looks at the complex tensions between social norms and change, donor dependency within Mali, the role of religion and culture within households, and international issues and agreements on women's rights. It first explores general understandings of the topic among FGD respondents and what content they feel could be broadcast and places this in opposition to content broadcast on this theme by Studio Tamani. Various aspects covered by radio are explored, such as awareness of legal texts, types of marriage, civil status, and self-awareness and promotion of self-esteem among women. It highlights key information that is side-lined or omitted from the radio broadcasts, such as widowhood and orphans, which are mentioned as being necessary by listeners, representing misalignments between audience and editorial priorities.

Women as Individuals or Within a 'Web of Relations'

Women's rights and empowerment underpin much of the development approach discussed here. They draw on universal human rights and the associated transformational agenda and are often cited for 'their emancipatory capacities and potential to empower vulnerable members of society' (Ngira, 2022: 1). However, they have also been widely labelled as an imperial imposition based on an individualised neo-liberal approach that is to be perceived as 'universal' but fails to consider socio-cultural particularities. This failure to consider cultural specificities was raised by Mali in 2018 in the case brought against it[1] before the African Court on Human and People's Rights challenging its 2011 Family Code[2] and stating it violated human rights law. As one of its arguments, Mali used cultural relativism to claim that it would be futile to bring in legislation such as the Maputo Protocol and CEDAW, as they would be difficult or impossible to implement because of the social, cultural, and religious realities of life in Mali (Kombo, 2019). These protocols are used as a tool to force governments to uphold their responsibilities with regard to citizens' rights. However, by locating responsibility for change at a state or public

[1] 'In July 2016, the Malian APDF and a pan-African IHRDA jointly submitted an application to the African Court challenging provisions of the 2011 Malian Family Code' (Kombo, 2019) APDF &IHRDA v Mali, (11 May 2018), Application 46/2016, para 67.

[2] Loi 2011–087 du 30 décembre 2011 Portant Code des Personnes et de la Famille.

sphere level, the private sphere where women's rights, such as female genital mutilation (FGM) or gender-based violence, are violated by communities or individuals can be overlooked and instead considered under the jurisdiction of 'culture' (Fox & Hasci, 1999; Tamale, 2008).

It is this latter point regarding cultural considerations and universality of rights that is problematic here and results not only in international declarations being viewed as foreign impositions (Kombo, 2019) but also deepens the divide between the 'imposers' (the Global North) and the 'imposees' (the Global South). This is no less the case with communication. Indeed, Dutta (2006: 222) confirms this contending that 'international development communication practice is in fact an uneven field with information and communication from the core actors to the actors in the periphery' and that information and communication organisations decide from a position of power what the recipient public's need is for information, how it is presented, and what the goal of that information should be (Abdulla, 2020). Dutta (2006) further emphasises that this is part of the discourse surrounding development work in which the Global North is advanced or developed and the Global South should strive to replicate their practices for their own better outcome. He suggests that the audience thus becomes 'marginal discursive spaces in the peripheries […] and act as targets of campaigns manufactured in the center' (Dutta, 2006: 222). International development communication discourse, therefore, determines what empowerment should be, and 'audiences require some sort of aid or help to achieve this "empowerment" in order to achieve the liberation of certain marginalized populations' (Kamlongera, 2022: 318).

Of interest here is whether Studio Tamani—the radio studio discussed in this chapter—promotes this 'top down' international development discourse. Does it impose cultural considerations from the Global North without considering local contexts, and does its journalism act as a loudspeaker for top-down messaging, deciding what the audience's information needs are?[3] As we know, Studio Tamani is run by Fondation Hirondelle, a Western development-oriented organisation, like its funders, and states that its activities 'contribute to the achievement of a number of Goals under UN Agenda 2030' (Fondation Hirondelle, 2021), including SDG5 on gender equality. Fondation Hirondelle's mission and values reflect a number of fundamental principles anchored in the legal

[3] For further discussion on radio's responses to the information needs of audiences, see Heywood and Yaméogo (2023).

instruments of international law and human rights, which could suggest that it does indeed adopt a top-down approach to its radio output, imposing predetermined solutions to situations labelled problems according to universal definitions. However, Studio Tamani itself, like all other Fondation Hirondelle radio studios, is run by locally based (not Western) journalists and editors based in Bamako, the capital, and a network of over 45 correspondents throughout the country, all of whom are also part of the local cultural framework. This aligns with the organisation's mission statement to 'produce its programmes entirely within the country, and broadcast them from within the country when they are broadcast over the air, with only local journalists appearing on air or in productions' (Fondation Hirondelle, 2016: 8). As such, they broadcast, via partner radio stations, to local and rural communities and aim to provide the link between Western development messages broadcast as stipulated by donors, in this case regarding women's empowerment and gender equity, on one hand, and local discourses on the other, and therefore between individualism and the tightly knit networks of people, performing multiple roles in accordance with entrenched cultural norms.

Whilst traditional or cultural practices such as FGM, polygamy, or other practices, and media representations of them, may well contribute to discourses keeping women in their subordinated position, Tamale states 'there are many cultural norms and values that are rights-supportive, egalitarian and uplifting; many aspects of 'African culture' promote and reinforce women's rights' (2008: 49). She challenges the opposition of culture and rights and the resultant culture/universality binary, instead recognising that solutions to women's oppression can be found in the 'careful and creative deployment of the more familiar cultural norms and values' (Tamale, 2008: 64). In other words, imposing top-down alien human rights laws may have limited impact on African women's rights, and bottom-up approaches embedded in local cultures and traditions will no doubt work better than those that exclude them and draw solely on top-down legal frameworks (Butegwa, 2002; Tamale, 2008). Culture/universality binaries also ignore the fact that (a) cultures are not static but evolve through their interactions with other cultures, thus creating new versions, and that (b) 'universal rights', as contained in declarations such as UDHR, are derived from an ethnocentric stance that reinforces a culture—that of the white privileged and the male and heterosexual North.

The dominant men/subservient women binary created in this neoliberal approach is important, as women, first as individuals and then as a

mobilised collective group seeking empowerment, are systematically placed in opposition to men. Terms and concepts such as power *with*, which we discuss in other chapters, are used in development policies and strategies 'to effect transformative social changes in "structures of subordination" so as to free [women] from subjugation" (Biewener & Bacqué, 2015: 61). In other words, women as individuals, autonomous immutable entities, come together and relate to one another to become empowered, but only within the existing patriarchy. Women are, therefore, categorised using this label, and this is their primary identifier in their fight for liberation (empowerment). This binary, established as a legacy of colonialism that was raised in Chap. 2 on women's political empowerment when women mobilised in opposition to men, emerges again here. Women are rarely perceived as independent individuals but rather as a group or collective.

In this chapter's discussions of radio broadcasts about, and audience perceptions of, inheritance we contrast this to an African relational perspective according to which the community, or *la grande famille* [extended family], dominates and members cannot be considered as autonomous individuals, as in the Western (colonial) understanding. People cannot be extracted from their community or relations with others because the common good prevails. However, they do not remain immutable entities that remain constant regardless of their activities (such as 'man' or 'woman' (Tamale, 2008)). Instead, individuals are fluid, and their identity is in constant flux depending on their interactions with others and their differing roles. Their identity is 'not constituted in opposition to that which is the other, but in relation to otherness' (Coetzee, 2018: 10). They are, therefore, part of a web of relations (Heywood & Ivey, 2021; Kabeer, 2012), in which, as Senghor stated, 'the group has priority over the individual without crushing the individual, but allowing the individual to blossom as a person' (1966: 5).

A woman in a community, for example, may be a mother, an entrepreneur, a wife, a daughter-in-law, and so on, shifting between different positions in society, each with different expectations, obligations, and pressures and cannot, as Oyěwùmí states, be considered in isolation or as unitary constructs (Heywood & Ivey, 2021; Kabeer, 2012). Women are not isolated individuals; they are embedded in social relationships. This is especially relevant in more collectivist cultures where social relations exert a significant influence on people's lives and well-being (Huis et al., 2020). However, because relational roles are insufficiently considered in Western

thinking, women in African or other Global South contexts, for example, are reduced to being mothers or carers, beholden to men as the main providers and to being in a subject/victim relationship (Chilisa & Ntseane, 2010). Thus, existing 'webs of relations' are conditioned by the prevailing patriarchy in which man is standard or centralised, and woman therefore becomes 'the other' or inferior. Women remain positioned in the 'ideological domestic site of the family—a gendered space closely associated with women (albeit headed by men)' (Tamale, 2008: 55),—and despite their undisputed central role in the family and community, their voice is side-lined in decision-making, exacerbating their positions of marginality (Lelei, 2005).

Inheritance, as a topic, allows us to discuss the tensions between the various thinking about (by audiences) and representations of (by radio) women's rights, especially given women's own inextricable and unenviable position within the process. We consider concepts such as those in the UN's four-year Gender Action Plan from 2007 (UN, 2005) seeking to empower women by 'increasing women's access to land, labor force participation, agriculture, infrastructure, and finance' (Biewener & Bacqué, 2015: 62) and more recently in SDG 5.5a (UN, 2022), which aims to 'undertake reforms to give women equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to ownership and control over land and other forms of property, financial services, inheritance and natural resources, in accordance with national laws'. We examine the audience's own perception of women and inheritance and that represented by Studio Tamani's radio broadcasts.

Mali Context

Mali's legal framework, inherited from French colonisation, is built around a constitution that enshrines the secular nature of the state and prohibits confessional political parties and, more generally, any interference between religion and politics (Crisis Group, 2017). However, Islam, practised by 90% of the population, occupies a dominant role in domestic life (Koné & Calvès, 2021). Divergencies in laws render inheritance rules complex to understand and even harder to challenge, resulting in discrimination, particularly amongst poorer, rural, and less-educated widows. The topic of inheritance simultaneously brings to the fore many aspects of life, such as polygamy, finance, land ownership, education, widowhood, and others, where women's actions are closely intertwined with those of other community and family members and from which they cannot be extracted to

act as autonomous individuals. However, when one part of that community construction breaks or disappears (death of a husband, in this case), the whole structure is threatened, particularly women, unless all involved agree to carry out pre-assigned and long-established roles. Discussing these complexities will make it easier to understand why it is important to consider women in relation to others rather than as individuals, particularly when broadcasting information or awareness raising programmes on this topic.

According to Mali's Family Code of 2011, 'religious and customary law is the default applicable law in matters of inheritance and the Family Code's inheritance provisions that provide for women's and men's equal share in inheritance would only apply in the event that one could not establish the cultural or religious practice'. Islamic law provides that women receive half of what men receive and that children born out of wedlock do not have the right to inheritance unless confirmed by the parents[4] (Budoo, 2018; Davi, 2018; Kombo, 2019). The Family Code (2011) also provides that female and male surviving spouses have equal rights to inherit assets[5] and that sons and daughters have equal rights to inherit assets from their parents.[6] However, men, as we have seen previously, are the sole owners of family property, and women's right to land use, typically lost when the husband dies, is contingent on marital status. Inheritance rights are also closely bound to marital status.

Inheritance is generally understood to cover the goods of the deceased person, but differences exist depending on cultural understandings (religious, customary, traditional) between *succession des biens* [succession of property] and *succession des femmes* [or widow inheritance or levirate]. Rights to the legacy, however defined, just like women's right to land use, depend on the type of marriage entered into. These are (a) civil marriage, generally among more educated, richer communities; (b) religious marriage, now covered by law in the Family Code 2011; and (c) traditional marriage conducted without any legal paperwork placing widows in

[4] As mentioned above, a challenge was brought by two organisations before the African Court against Mali and its implementation of the 2011 Family Code. They contested, and this was upheld, amongst others, that Mali had contravened international agreements on protecting the right to inheritance of women and natural children. Mali was ordered to amend its Family Code to align with international human rights standards (Budoo, 2018; Davi, 2018; Kombo, 2019).

[5] Loi No. 2011–087 Portant Code des Personnes et de la Famille, Arts. 770, 798 et 800.

[6] Loi No. 2011–087 Portant Code des Personnes et de la Famille, Arts. 753 et 773.

positions of extreme vulnerability. In the last case, the deceased's estate goes back to the '*grande famille*' (parents, brothers, sons), and the widow can remain within her deceased husband's family household with her children, often being married to the deceased's younger brother through the levirate process, or if she refuses, she must return to her own family with nothing and often relinquishing rights to her children.

When discussing inheritance, family organisations must not be examined from the perspective of a Western nuclear family where 'conjugal pairs' dominate (husband-wife). Instead, in this context, extended families are organised in co-residential forms built around lineages. A woman has multiple co-relational identities (mothers, daughters, sisters, and not just wives or co-wives), and affinal relationships to, and obligations with, all members of the husband's *grande famille* are as important as conjugal relations. Whilst women might defer to husbands, their social position can alter depending on their role (mother-in-law, elder sister, senior female family member, etc.) and over time as they gain seniority. Deference is then offered to them, and they exert significant influence over junior male and female family members (Sudarkasa, 2005). Therefore, the man/woman gender binary found in many Western rights declarations must be contextualised here because '"woman" as a unitary construct fails to take account of women's interests as members of generations, families of economic groups […] women's relationships with other women may in themselves be exploitative and hierarchical' (Cornwall, 2005: 4).

International human rights agreements regarding the inheritance rights of women, for example, Article 21(2) of the Maputo Protocol, which provides that women and men shall 'have the right to inherit their parents' property in equitable shares' (Davi, 2018: 2) and that countries are obliged to 'eliminate traditions and customs that are harmful towards women and children (also in 5(a) CEDAW and 1(3) ACRWC)' (Davi, 2018: 2), do not, according to Mali, consider Mali's cultural complexities (Kombo, 2019). Instead, if viewed from the Western perceptive of women being a unitary construct within a conjugal pair, they can misrepresent the realities of co-relational extended families in many African societies. Polygamous families and their complex internal hierarchies of women (mothers, wives, co-wives, sisters-in-law) are not fully considered. However, many cultural specificities can lead to further discrimination against women, including widows, their use of land, their place in the community and community responses to them, finances, the possibility of losing their children,

levirate, polygamy, position as mother,[7] shame, accusations from the community of witchery or of triggering the husband's early death, all of which were raised by focus group respondents.

Land Laws

When discussing representations of a topic within an international human rights framework, we must also refer to the strategy and mission documents of the organisation producing those representations, Fondation Hirondelle in this case. Their strategic aims and vision were discussed in the Introduction, but as a reminder, Fondation Hirondelle aims to provide 'independent, credible and impartial information that is close to its audience and contributes to ending conflict and building more peaceful societies'.[8] It refers to Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which states, 'Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers'. Its strategy also states that its 'mission and the values which guide it reflect a number of fundamental principles which are anchored in the legal instruments of international law and human rights. Fondation Hirondelle operates where journalistic activity intersects the humanitarian-development-peace nexus,[9] and its activities contribute to the achievement of a number of Goals under UN Agenda 2030, in particular 16 (peaceful, just societies), 5 (gender equality) and 10 (reduced inequalities)'.

The chapter discusses Fondation Hirondelle's journalistic activities, via Studio Tamani, and the extent to which it draws on contextual particularities 'presented without commentary', enabling its representations of universal rights, in various topics areas, to remain relevant to the corresponding audiences without giving in to discriminatory social norms. Drawing on responses from FGD participants and a content analysis of Studio Tamani's broadcasts on inheritance, we examine the extent to which inheritance

[7] Malian women's status is largely derived from their roles as mothers: childbearing and rearing (Madhavan, 2001) and links 'Motherism' and the centrality of the mother in African thought. Conversely, single or infertile women and widows can be severely disadvantaged (Van de Walle, 2013).

[8] https://www.hirondelle.org/en/who-we-are

[9] The policy term used to outline stronger collaboration and coordination among the humanitarian, development, and peace sectors (Nguya & Siddiqui, 2020).

affects women, families, and communities, both rural and urban, how it is represented on the radio, and, if any advice is given, whether it aligns with 'imposed' international laws while remaining culturally relevant. We also look at how the radio's approach is perceived by listeners.

Audience Perceptions

Responses given during the focus group discussions evidenced the complexities surrounding inheritance in Mali. Each time a consensus about a particular statement or definition was reached, a contradiction or condition impacting that clarity was instantly evoked, suggesting that explanations via radio, for example, might prevent a reliance on discriminatory customs that are maintained because 'that's the way it is'. The very definition of inheritance ranged from goods and animals to a broad acceptance that it also included the family name and human inheritance (RMW4Mb). Whatever the definition, there was general agreement that women were disadvantaged on many fronts and that the various laws, religious practices, and customs were both gendered and gendering, depriving women of their inheritance rights and discriminating against them. Throughout the discussions, religious law prevailed consistently over state law, with many blurred lines between religious laws and traditions and customs. The actual practice of apportioning estates according to religious (Islamic) law was understood either from personal experience following the death of a father or husband, and several respondents could provide details of the various calculations. Whilst superficially the outcome is clearly in favour of male and/or family heirs rather than the widow, several of the male FGDs justified it through a community approach that benefits all.

> In rural areas especially, property does not belong to any specific person. The property primarily belongs to the family. In other words, the family's property is not given to the wife just because the husband has died. The property still belongs to the family and not to an individual in rural areas. (RUMW2Mb)

According to participants, sons or the *grande famille* into which the wife has married inherit all the estate, including the wife—an understanding that was challenged in the broadcasts—as this would cover the cost of supporting the inherited wife and her children, offset the bride price, and ensure that the family land and family name are not divided or ultimately

become the property of a new husband outside the family. They explained that sons inherit twice that of daughters and are responsible for taking care of their widowed mothers, sisters, wives, and possibly inherited wives, unlike the daughters who do not have that duty. Added to this is the land law of 2017, which prevents women from inheriting land in any case. The combined outcome serves to entrench discriminatory patriarchal practices that bind women to the *grande famille* with no clear exit route. They are instead forced to abandon their own right to independence, and those of their children, to the benefit of those in their web of relations. We can look at these points and perceptions of them amongst listeners one by one, although it is just as difficult to separate them as it is to extricate women from the resulting web of relations.

Respondents' combined knowledge of religious, customary, and civil laws revealed deep-rooted and gendered discrimination. Civil laws were often considered futile in many contexts or not a valid option, given the widespread conviction that both education and finances were essential to be in a position to apply them. Respondents' understanding of the various laws depended on their levels of education and location (urban or rural), with men understanding the most. The rural married women said, 'We've been told about laws but if you don't have someone who can help you to access these things, it's not easy. If you don't have anything, nobody will listen to you' (RMW4M). Some respondents were specific and were able to explain details of various inheritance laws, particularly the younger unmarried women in urban areas, suggesting that awareness campaigns (radio, associations, schools) were effective in some areas at challenging the more established information among older generations. However, many respondents were not aware of any laws on inheritance or how they could be relevant to them, and they did not recall broadcasts about it. 'We haven't really heard this topic on the radio, it's rare that we talk about it. We don't talk about this subject' (RUMW2Mb). This highlighted the gap that radio, as the declared main source of information, could fill, challenging a situation whereby tradition and customs are accepted because, as one women respondent stated, 'Yes, you could go to the courts, but it's in society that things are really settled, just because this is how it is, it's already established and understood, this method of sharing things out' (RUMW2M). Given the low literacy rate among women caused by educational disadvantages, women are again discriminated against, as they are not in a position to seek justice via the courts, despite this being the main solution suggested by all the FGDs. Women are, therefore, dependent on

others to help them extract themselves from the situation that those same relationships have put them in.

> She could go to court to claim her share, but it depends on the mental strength of the woman because some are afraid, others are not. It really depends on their education. (RUMW3Mb)

Discriminatory inheritance practices are also rooted in tradition and rituals that bind women, with traditional practices prevailing over civil laws, particularly in rural areas. However, all respondents knew and/or had experience of widowhood and therefore knew how it worked in practice. Yet, all their information merged, and lines appeared blurred between rules and types of marriage and the associated difficulties, again highlighting the need for clear information. One male respondent explained the main types of marriage—civil, religious, and customary—and the various inheritance outcomes for women. He stated that religious marriages now have the same value as civil marriages, as they both offer marriage certificates, which are important for the registration process for future children. Many councils and mayors, he said, were actively encouraging couples to marry through official routes and thus be in receipt of marriage certificates, giving women rights and changing mentalities (RM2Mb).

In the absence of a legal marriage, be it civil or religious, a widow's family-in-law can claim all the inheritance, leaving her and her children with nothing. 'Here, for example, rural people don't get married at the town hall. Therefore, once the head of the family dies, it's the parents who claim it all for themselves because there wasn't a legal marriage' (RMW4M). The negative role of other female family members on widows was frequently raised during the women's FGDs. They provided multiple examples of women being driven from their deceased husband's home, having their goods and animals taken, or being treated badly in their new home, confirming Acholonu's statement that 'women are part and parcel of, if not the power behind' male dominance (1995: 28).

Younger, educated, unmarried women respondents in urban areas were optimistic about their future rights, suggesting that attitudes were changing and that having a civil marriage could 'save' a woman and give her a rightful inheritance, evoking the concept of independence from the family.

> Women have a smaller share of the inheritance because when the husband dies, the majority of the shares are given to the parents and then to the fam-

> ily. But the woman can be saved if she has been married through the Town Hall. If she has a marriage certificate, she can have a percentage. (RUMW2M)

However, their rural counterparts recounted a different situation involving levirate, the process whereby a widow is 'given' to the deceased's younger brother in marriage. This keeps the estate of the deceased in the family along with his children, yet respondents also reported the many tensions that this imposed system creates. For example, the younger brother is also obliged to accept the widow as a new wife regardless of whether he has the financial means to support her and her children or older children who would prefer to stay in their own home with their mother rather than moving in with their uncle and his family. The web of relations, therefore, extends beyond widows, affecting many. Respondents said that the widows have to agree to levirate but, in reality, have little choice: either they agree and stay with their children in the family household, or they are cast out with no financial support, no children and must return to their own family if they can support her.

> It is said that a woman is the inheritance of a man. When the man dies, she has to stay in that family, marry one of the brothers. And they don't even ask her which brother she wants to marry; they just give her to one of them. (RMW4M)

Many younger unmarried women respondents railed against the injustice of this subjugation and the fact that widows are considered a belonging of the family rather than an individual with agency and rights. They objected to having to prioritise the *grande famille*. Urban respondents amongst them were adamant that 'it'd be better to give the woman the freedom to decide herself who she wants to marry, or if she wants to remarry' (RUMW3M).

Inheritance is further complicated in polygamous marriages, which affects almost 40% of women in Mali (Millogo et al., 2022). When up to four unions are legally permitted (for men) at one time, dividing up an inheritance can be problematic, especially if the marriages are formed under different laws, as legally married widows and their children will have greater entitlement than those married according to customary law. However, because hierarchies in families are gender-based, the more sons a widow has, the greater her share of the inheritance:

> Even if the head of the family has two or three wives, the woman who has the most boys is the one who will benefit the most compared to the other women. And now there are boys who do not agree to share the inheritance even in the family. (RUMW1M)

However, as one woman said, levirate does provide widows with an element of stability and certainty, despite the reluctance they may have towards the arrangement. She explained the alternative:

> You'll have all the problems in the world if you refuse. If you refuse, even to be fed in that household, you will have problems, your children too. Some people will even chase you away. You'll have no means to support your children. You'd have to have a *petit commerce* to support yourself. You're the one who's got manage with your children now. It's not easy, and you have to pay for your children's education, everything, shoes, clothes, health. (UMW2MB)

Nonetheless, widows may also be reluctant to stay in the *grande famille* through levirate because of communicable diseases, and many respondents said that women preferred not to marry their husband's brother to protect themselves (RUMW2M). However, widows who have decided not to stay within the marital household are perceived as a financial burden by their birth family. They are deemed troublemakers because they did not show respect for their marital family and will consequently be unsuitable to be married into another family because 'any woman who tries to claim her rights will be shunned by society. They'll call that woman all sorts of things. They'll say that she is not respectful, they will even banish her' (RMW4M). The perceived significant risk that widows present to family communities if they leave the *grande famille,* thus becoming an 'individual other', escalates to the circulation of serious threats and rumours. Female participants recounted rumours about the part played by young widows in the deaths of their older husbands and of women who are fearful of speaking out as they have been threatened with spells (RMW4M). This has a double-edged effect, as it prevents widows from leaving the family through fear of being shunned by society and prevents society from accepting them into their families. As individuals, particularly in rural traditions, widows are not considered healthy for the community and continue to be entrapped in this societal web. Widows are thus subsumed

quietly into the marital family with older married respondents drawing on 'tradition' as a justification:

> There are women who struggle, who fight, but it's rare. The majority of women remain silent. They accept how it is and resign themselves to it. This is our reality; these are our traditions. (RMW4Mb)

When questioned as to whether widows think this is fair and whether they should have the same rights as other members of society, they simply replied: 'They've no choice. Worse still, the inheritance is split without their agreement. But that's just how it is' (RMW1Mb). Universal rights do not extend to this group of women.

However, alternatives to the discrimination faced by women and to their inability to pursue steps towards empowerment as proposed by development organisations emerge, particularly amongst younger married women and educated married women. Male respondents are less condemnatory when discussing levirate, inheritance, and women. They describe a seemingly reasonable process that involves consultations between the wider family and the widow with no obligations on the latter to agree. The reality of the choice presented to widows—marrying a younger brother-in-law against their will or losing their children—is minimised and barely proposed as a believable option. The emphasis, instead, is placed on the other members of the family who would be harmed if the widow leaves.

A: If the husband dies right away, the wife is offered to the husband's brother. But this is not an obligation. But the woman is made to sit down and is made aware that she must be given to the husband's younger brother. If she accepts, it's not a problem, she stays there. If she doesn't accept, then she can go.

Q: Where can she go?

A: As part of our tradition, if the woman doesn't accept her husband's younger brother, she will still stay in the family. But now she is told to make her choice in the family among the men who are there. If she finds her choice, she will get married there in the family. If not, if the woman leaves the family right away to be somewhere else, the children will stay behind, not only as orphans, it can also bring frustration in the family. (RM1M)

Solutions proffered by respondents are constructed within the framework of a man/woman binary. Few female participants talk about oppression emanating from the members of the broader patriarchy, for example, their mothers-in-law, sisters-in-law, and senior co-wives. However, concerns regarding finance and the break-up of the extended family and its estate dominate rather than those about women's empowerment versus men's empowerment. Wills are suggested as a viable, but rare, solution to widows losing their inheritance:

> If a woman's husband dies, the succession is basically managed in two ways: there is the traditional way that says that the woman is already a family member, and she stays in the family. She can remarry a brother of her deceased husband. And everything that belongs to the deceased husband goes back by right not necessarily to the wife but to the one who inherits the wife and her children. That's the first way, and what is rare, the second way, is that the man before his death made his will in accordance with the law and this will is applied. (RM2Mb)

However, wills are also perceived as a threat to the *grande famille,* as they can result in family estates being divided to the benefit of individual widows. There is a generational and geographic divide regarding wills. Younger unmarried women in urban areas are aware of wills and the need for them as a tool to obtain their rights and stated that they would encourage their future husbands to organise one. Those in, and those talking about those in, rural areas, however, dismiss wills as barely relevant and not aligned with traditions, as most marriages are not legal and little paperwork is completed in any regard. The rights of the community, driven by strong social values, currently prevail over those of the individual, reinforcing Oyěwùmí's (1997) assertion that women cannot be considered in isolation or as unitary constructs.

As with many other topics discussed in this book, respondents stated that women, not just widows who are not portrayed as a discrete group, must trigger change themselves by working together towards a common goal, but this is only possible through increased awareness. Women's organisations are cited as an essential channel to inform women of their rights, particularly those in rural communities with lower education. The laws themselves are not criticised but rather their application (RMW3Mb). They were adamant that only the law could bring change, but it is the responsibility of educated women and women's associations to raise

awareness among other women, thus calling for horizontal and vertical solidarity among them. Nonetheless, they acknowledge that change is coming, albeit extremely slowly,

> We have the means for advocacy because even the authorities are doing a lot now. For example, in the community dialogue spaces, the village chiefs, leaders, traditional chiefs, everyone is looking at the issue, to know how to move forward with rights, with laws. But without women, nothing is possible, so we have to give back to women what belongs to them […]. The road ahead is long, very, very long. But I think that with determination, with a synergy of actions, with the support of the state and partners, we will get there one day. (RMW4M)

Radio was regarded by all as an important and accessible tool for raising awareness. Many respondents attributed changes in knowledge to radio broadcasts.

> The wife is part of the husband, so the inheritance should be divided. Before, people used to say that only the men were entitled to the inheritance. But now, because of the radio broadcasts, we've learnt that it's not just the man. Even if there's a woman who is pregnant, whose child hasn't yet been born, the child has the full right to take their share of the inheritance. We found this out through the programmes. (RMW4M)

However, it was felt that more awareness raising was needed, as it would only be by chance that a listener would hear the rare radio broadcasts on inheritance. However, programmes, as we have already seen, would also have to be in an attractive format or the information would have to be disguised using an edutainment approach to win over many listeners. African radio listeners, according to unmarried women in rural areas (RUMW4M), are especially difficult to convince, describing them as stubborn and preferring to do the opposite of what they are advised, thus adding another layer of complexity to the task of broadcasting awareness-raising programmes. 'If they listen to radio, they'll scoff and say, "What are they talking about, they're crazy". Others simply change the radio station, so they don't have to listen. They are very stubborn; it is not easy' (RUMW4M). In other words, laws, changes to laws, and the implementation of laws would have to be imposed on communities for change to be brought about, confirming Tamale's (2008) assertion that while it is necessary for local cultures and traditions to be taken into account as part of

bottom-up procedures, constitutional and legal frameworks can act as the foundation touchstone for women's rights.

The complexity of the inheritance process in Mali was clear from the listeners' responses. Not only did listeners not understand the various rules or their application, but very few grasped their relevance and were instead resigned to customs and traditional practices being prioritised. However, there was a sense that the situation may be changing, mainly among younger listeners who spoke of measures being taken by authorities and awareness-raising campaigns led by radio, NGOs, and schools. Both male and female respondents were aware of gender discrimination yet could not see how women could be extracted from their 'webs' without being ostracised; it was an 'either/or' situation. Remaining within the family was perceived as being the preferable option for a woman's and a family's long-term security. This was reinforced by statements that widows are often badly perceived by society in any case, let alone if they are cast out having refused levirate offers. Whilst they welcomed information on the radio on inheritance and considered it an important channel to help improve awareness, if not the actual situation, they stated that the topic of widowhood was rarely addressed, reflecting how widows are subsumed into 'women' rather than being a discrete group worthy of attention. So how did Studio Tamani address these points? Did it consider the gap between the concept of rights, laws in force (religious, civic, or customary), and widows' reality? What did the programmes promote, or did they follow, mission statements to promote awareness, therefore encouraging informed debate and decision-making amongst men and women for women's benefit?

Studio Tamani's Representations

Studio Tamani's inheritance series comprised ten programmes: one *Grand Dialogue*, from Kayes in western Mali, with the regular male presenter and one male and three female guests; seven '*portraits*' or *magazines* (all of women) also shown in a televised format; one *film documentaire* (a mix of women and men); and one *motion design* (voiced by a woman). The broadcasts aimed to provide a space for dialogue, articulating a range of perspectives through different voices in varying formats that, based on the discussions in Chap. 2, should be attractive to a broad audience. While customary, civic, and religious laws are discussed generally, specific details are not provided, and traditional practices emerge as the dominant social

framework. As one guest stated, 'The first thing to do is to sit down and talk. Talk about how the estate must be shared according to the customs, traditions, and religions of those concerned' (Sogodogo Binta Traoré, representative of the Ministry for the Promotion of Women, Children and the Family, *Grand Dialogue*, 14 October 2019). The empowerment message that emerged strongly in many of the other radio series is replaced here by one of cultural norms, and women's stereotypical entrenched submissive and passive position in many situations is reinforced.

In line with Fondation Hirondelle's vision to provide 'independent, credible and impartial information', there is little judgement on the treatment of women, and when there is, this is voiced directly by a speaker (studio guest, or via a testimonial), avoiding any confusion that they are acting as the mouthpiece of the radio studio. Radio is only heard through the voices it allows to speak, and superficially, there is a balance providing a range of perspectives about inheritance. The programmes portray women in a wide range of relations, including with in-laws, siblings, widows, husbands, men, family, and children, yet the widows are homogenous, contrasting with the range of roles mentioned by the focus group respondents. They describe dominant male heirs in opposition to submissive widows within the extended family. The *Grand Dialogue* presents inheritance from an Islamic, Christian, and legal perspective, all emphasising that the woman should receive her due entitlement. It is explained that, according to Islam and traditional practices, women receive half that of a male heir. The Christian perspective states that the wife and children receive the estate, and the legal representative on the broadcast stated that rules are in place to be observed but a marriage certificate or birth certificate is obligatory.[10] Without a certificate, no legal proceedings can proceed. This places many women at a disadvantage, as they have either lost their official documents during forced displacement or they have never had them. This, guests confirmed, was particularly the case in rural areas.

> In our country, the sharing of inheritance has rules; you have to have a marriage certificate, a birth certificate, that's compulsory. Nowadays, if you don't have these papers, it's quite difficult. If you have these papers, we can guide you towards the structures that can solve your problems. (Diaby

[10] The Law 2011–087 on the Code of Persons and the Family (30 December 2011) provides the legal framework for birth certificates. This document is essential not only for identification but also to gain access to education, to health services, to be able to vote, for inheritance rights, to travel and for marriage certificates which, in turn, are required to register children.

> Kalissi Doucouré, lawyer and director of the Kayes legal clinic, *Grand Dialogue*, 14 October 2019)

The overarching narrative in this series, however, while explaining how the system works, how the apportionment of the inheritance is calculated, and how possible disputes could be resolved, is still situated within deep-seated social norms that, through a development lens, remain discriminatory. Clear definitions are provided throughout the series from various speakers, and many align with listeners' understanding. Nonetheless, there are statements that challenge cultural practices, such as 'widow inheritance' or levirate, and these are addressed from a religious perspective rather than the socio-economic perspective of the focus group respondents:

> Before, women were part of the inheritance, but that was a lack of understanding. Qur'anic verses have taught us that women should not even be part of the man's inheritance. She can be given some property. But she should never be part of the inheritance. (Adama Issa Sacko, a traditionalist from Kayes, *Grand Dialogue*, 14 October 2019)

Some direct or implied recommendations from the *Grand Dialogue* guests include warnings about the consequences of going to court and completely severing links with other parties. They suggest instead that all concerned should be convened to divide the estate of the deceased according to the Qur'an. Whilst not deterring widows from going to court, they use the platform of radio to make it very clear that the consequences of pursuing this path may prove to be even more detrimental to women. There are, however, numerous examples and testimonies of when the inheritance process proves prejudicial to women, especially when implemented too zealously in the interests of the deceased's family.

> When the deceased dies, the wife encounters many difficulties. Her husband's brothers impose themselves on her. They claim that the property belongs to them, not to the wife. These women suffer as do their children. I have an example. One widow had nine pregnancies with her husband, and among the nine, one child died. And the eighth, is the only boy. He was twelve years old when his father died. After the husband's death, the wife went for the funeral to the extended family. After the funeral, she came back to find that her house had already been occupied by her late husband's relatives, and she was told to take the small hut that was next door. The woman stayed in that hut with her eight children, while one other person occupied

> her late husband's house. They forced the woman to stay in that hut. The woman was crying as she explained the situation to me. (Mme Djénéba Sissoko, President of the Tekereni Benso Association in Kayes, *Grand Dialogue*, 14 October 2019)

Guests on the *Grand Dialogue* (14 October 2019) advocate that widows should aim for continuity, 'avoid disruptions and tension', and abide by the law, without clearly stipulating which law they are referring to. The guests promote a widow's place as part of a community or web of relations, suggesting that the social practices of the majority in many listener communities conflict with development discourses that promote women's (individual) empowerment and equality. The broadcast provides no mention of any positive action that widows could take but does give several examples from representatives of women's associations of how women have been 'cheated' out of their inheritance. There is no critique of prevailing structural inequalities or lack of rights to property. Whilst the Christian perspective is provided initially by one guest claiming that, in this framework, sharing the inheritance is not too problematic, the other guests go on to say that they cannot comment further from personal experience: 'We don't know anything about Christian law'. Therefore, they mostly cite Islamic rules, which they speak of as being law. Universal rights are not referred to, nor are cultures outside Africa or Mali; thus, the discussion is situated within a specific context with its structural inequalities.

The two-minute *Motion Design* is the one element in the radio package that promotes ideas found in NGO development campaigns that inheritance in Mali is gender discriminatory but also considers women both within her web of relations and in a context where customary laws prevail. With supporting animations, it counters those who support levirate marriage and claim that it protects widows from destitution, using arguments that widows 'experience it as a double penalty'. This is because they are 'forced to marry the brother of the deceased against their will. Second, she may be abandoned by her new spouse who has only accepted this union in order to gain access to the inheritance'. It also situates inheritance within a broader context referring to women's restricted access to land,[11]

[11] The land law of 2017 can be gender discriminatory. Women have long been forming associations to improve their land tenure security by using the land for collective use. The new law reinforces this by requiring that 15 per cent of public land be allocated to women's associations. https://www.iisd.org/articles/insight/historic-new-law-secures-land-malian-farmers

especially widows 'who have difficulty accessing full ownership or bank loans to buy land'. By providing recommendations for couples to write a will and to keep their documents safe, this short clear animation underlines the fact that discriminatory practices place the onus on women to prove their entitlement to an estate and avoid being 'expelled from the marital home or having parental authority over her children withdrawn'. However, as previously stated in Chap. 2, the *Motion Designs* are visuals, not audio output, and accessible on YouTube and then via social media, which significantly reduces possible audiences for this constructive information, given lack of accessibility and viewing habits. The power and gendered dynamics at work within social practices remain unchallenged, questioning the effect of this programme's message.

The seven *magazines* and their televised equivalents broadcast testimonies that are all spoken by women: three widows and four representatives of women's and legal associations. They provide a variety of opinions from some who have suffered as widows and others who support or advocate professionally for them. The range of voices included in these short broadcasts is one of their key features, yet ensuring that listeners listen to them all given that they are broadcast on different days is somewhat aspirational. This calls into question the 'plurivocal' effect of these testimonies and the heterogeneous nature of Malian women who speak in many voices (Heywood & Ivey, 2021). Widows emerge within two scenarios: one within the family web and the other having been cut off from the web with no financial or other support having refused levirate, for example, or having been forced out of the family home. In the former case, women are presented as being passive, subjugated but financially secure, performing a traditional gendered domestic role in a disempowered context. In the latter case, widows become individuals without the support and security of the web. They are no longer empowered by being 'independent'; instead, they are alone and isolated. Being deprived of all support, they are portrayed as now having to be active, with agency, and needing to rely on their own competencies for their own survival and that of their children: 'Had I not known how to trade from a young age, things could have been really difficult for me after our husband's death' (Ouma Fofana, widow). The same advice as in the *Motion Design* to make a will, keep the correct documents and ensure they have a trade is issued to widows, placing the onus on women to find solutions, rather than broadcasting messages that conflict with the entrenched discriminatory and gendered social norms, which undoubtedly would be rejected or ignored as being irrelevant or

impracticable. The mistreatment of widows is attributed by Mme Djénéba Damba (President of the Association Tékèrèni) to greed and lack of faith in God, suggesting that cultural or social norms are not at fault as they have worked in the past; it is more the fact that people no longer respect religious teachings. As a result, society has to resort to drawing up wills rather than simply following religious law.

> Men should make a will because no one knows when death will occur. A will would save their wives and children from suffering after their death. In the past, the division of the inheritance was more equitable and better organised than it is today. I invite each of us to turn to faith. It helps us to keep a good heart and get rid of greed.

Fondation Hirondelle also aspires to be 'representative of all segments of society' (Fondation Hirondelle strategy document 2021–2024). Whilst this research has determined that the programmes do indeed represent women, they could go further by identifying sub-segments of women within this marginalised group. Dialogue is at the heart of Fondation Hirondelle's mission statement and is a prerequisite for the gradual approach needed to soften deep-rooted ideas in society. To achieve this, women's voices need to be heard at all levels to reflect the complex nature of their multiple relations within their social webs. This would avoid falling into the trap of constructing and reinforcing widow/women and men/women binaries, widely promoted by many donors, and allow the webs in which women are entangled to be revealed as deeply intricate but also impregnable. Although the broadcasts are varied and attractive in form, a more diverse and complex representation of women and women's voices is needed.

Conclusion

This chapter focused on inheritance and the extent to which the allocation of that inheritance affects women, families, and communities, both rural and urban, how this is represented by radio, and, if any advice is given, whether it aligns with 'imposed' international development discourse while remaining culturally relevant. It also questioned whether the radio broadcasts presented women as individuals or within their societal web of relations.

Respondents' understanding of the various laws depended on their levels of education and location (urban or rural). Educational barriers encountered by women, resulting in low literacy rates, meant that women were again discriminated against, as they were not able to use legal proceedings—the main solution provided by all the FGDs—to obtain justice and remained dependent on others to help them. A difference in understandings and practices emerged between men and women listeners, married older and unmarried younger women listeners, and urban and rural listeners.

Fondation Hirondelle, via Studio Tamani, adhered to its mission statement by producing broadcasts produced in the country, for the country and by those in the country. In doing so, it scrutinised inheritance from the perspective of local communities within the complex framework of extracting women from family structures and their 'webs of relations'. Women were not individualised in this radio series; rather, there was a tendency to homogenise them. The resultant men/subservient women binary that dominated was important as women, first as individuals, then as a mobilised collective group seeking empowerment, continued to be systematically placed in opposition to men. There are few, if any, programmes on the subgroup of, or within, widows, for example, to the extent that listeners suggested that widows and orphans are absent from the airwaves as a topic but broadcasts focusing on them would be welcome. Individual empowerment, particularly regarding inheritance, was not presented as a viable or attractive option. Decisions are made largely by the *grande famille*, and those taken by widows are barely a choice, more a decision between two negative options.

Unless its core values are compromised, Fondation Hirondelle endeavours to avoid a top-down approach, a criticism widely levelled at NGOs and development organisations. According to Manyozo (referred to in Obregón & Tufte, 2017: 643), this is a development approach or strategy that 'remains embedded in the Western neoliberal development paradigm, which has been criticized for its ethnocentric approach and negative social consequences'. Nonetheless, Fondation Hirondelle's General Director, recognising the organisation's position of power in the countries in which they operate, stated that they aim to 'position ourselves to integrate as an institution so we can make it work for each project and each country' (Vuillemin, 2018).

The information contained in the radio programmes aligned with many of the comments of the FGD respondents, but, in doing so, it tended to confirm embedded gender discrimination rather than suggesting any

avenues to challenge it. Fondation Hirondelle's aim is to stimulate dialogue, but on this topic, alternatives (making wills, keeping documents safe, and not challenging the status quo) were barely suggested, with the possible exception of the *Motion Design*. However, this animated programme itself has drawbacks, as it is a visual rather than audio product, significantly limiting its reach. Similarly, opportunities are not fully seized to promote women's rights as set down in UN SDG 5.5a, the Maputo Protocol, or CEDAW, for example, regarding inheritance and associated land ownership.

Be it because of the complexity of the topic or the time limitations of the broadcasts, details that could clarify misunderstandings and confusions about inheritance are noticeable by their absence in this series; therefore, radio is not optimised in its recognised role as a principal awareness-raising tool. Greater airtime could be dedicated to a clear and digestible overview of these complex laws and their application and provide listeners with accurate and accessible information on an important topic that could be subsequently discussed, with the possibility of changing behaviour and perceptions amongst men and women of all ages. Rather than attempting to accommodate universal declarations of human rights and local contexts, the series risk reinforcing women's subjugation and oppression in this patriarchal society.

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CHAPTER 6

'We're More Than Just a Radio': Radio Scout and Its Women's Listening Associations

Introduction

It would be impossible to write this book without dedicating a significant part to the wonderful women of Radio Scout and their KalangouWomen's Listening Association in the outskirts of Niamey who welcomed me frequently into their group, filling me with awe and admiration not only of their drive and determination to fight for themselves, their families, and community given so many societal constraints but also their spirit of fun, camaraderie, and the endless laughter and giggling that filled the air as we entered the radio compound to meet them. Whilst traditionally theoretical and academic, this chapter is inspired by these women and it is they who bring life into my discussions of participatory communication, defined as the 'type of communication in which all the interlocutors are free and have equal access to the means to express their viewpoints, feelings, and experiences' (Diaz Bordenave, 1994: 43) and empowerment theories on collective power. Rather than focusing on the radio output of radio studios, which has been the case in previous chapters, the chapter draws on the women at Radio Scout to illustrate how local involvement by women in community radio and listening associations can promote women's empowerment and contribute to an empowering environment. Although the ability to earn money may improve life, an empowering environment for women cannot centre purely on income and being given funds, a criticism of many development programmes. It must also

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promote women's right to speak and make their own decisions, work, and property within their existing relationships and structures (Sholkamy, 2010). Participation, be it in formal or informal structures, brings together marginalised people, women in this case, who are excluded from decision-making processes and raises their role within them. Women not only gain power over decisions through their own participation in these processes but also by becoming aware of what is oppressing them and their own internalised oppression (Rowlands, 1997: 14).

Empowerment, as conceptualised by Batliwala (1994: 132), is 'a spiral, changing consciousness, identifying areas to target for change, planning strategies, acting for change, and analyzing activities and outcomes'. It is this very environment that radio provides to enable a change in consciousness by disseminating information through broadcasts and via associations that can, transformatively, give time and space to identify, discuss, and further the reach of that information. The concept of social space for empowerment has been widely promoted (see as long ago as Evans, 1979: 219–220 in Mosedale, 2005), and it is evident how this relates to the environment provided by radio and listening associations. The latter provide social spaces where people can develop an independent sense of worth in contrast with their usual self-perceived or actual status as second-class or inferior citizens. Through the appointment of leaders and others, role models emerge as examples of those who break out of patterns of passivity. Listening associations can use their space to discuss broadcasts and apply new information to local contexts, explaining sources of oppression and their effects and questioning a qualitatively different future. This information does not remain static but ripples beyond officially registered association members, allowing new networks to be created through which a new interpretation can spread, activating a social movement and forcing individuals to confront inherited cultural definitions. Thus, radio not only fulfils the role of promoting 'collective solidarity in the public arena as well as individual assertiveness in the private' (Kabeer, 1999: 457) but it, and its associations, also support the fact that empowerment is a process and awareness, importantly, facilitates the ability to transform this into action. Without action, the process stops.

When discussing empowerment, distinctions between four different concepts of power relations based on Rowlands (1997: 13) are widely made and were outlined in the Introduction. These types have been applied to the economic domain (Alemu et al., 2018; Pereznieto & Taylor, 2014) and more broadly, for example, Mosedale (2005), Tandon (2016),

Solava and Alkire (2007) and 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, and (3) 'power *with*', or collective power; and (4) 'power from *within*' or psychological power, self-acceptance, and self-belief (Rowlands, 1997: 13). Power relations are therefore recognised and categorised to become more productive and less controlling. Rowlands also groups activity into three spheres: individual empowerment, collective empowerment, and empowerment in close relations (1997: 22). The first are unique experiences, but others might have experienced something similar; the second are group actions working towards a common goal; and the last may be the most complex, as it involves changing individuals who face resistance from decision-makers over their lives within their own homesteads. This could increase the risk of male backlash, which has been documented in several studies evaluating the consequences of women's increased economic independence, e.g., Luke and Munshi (2011), and Weitzman (2014), both papers concern India; Alesina et al. (2020) on Africa. Male backlash, the risk of which permeates many of the discussions in this book, may occur as a result of men feeling that their role as head of the household and breadwinner is being undermined. Women's empowerment may be perceived as meaning male disempowerment.

Using the example of women's listening associations formed in 2018 in the outskirts of Niamey, the chapter demonstrates how, as Rennie states (2006: 134), small-scale, bottom-up solutions can be more effective than general macro policies. We see 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 of effecting social change.

Participation, Listening Associations, and Women's Empowerment

Participation can emerge in many forms. Carpentier, for example, distinguishes between participation *in* the media and participation *through* the media, or 'content-related participation' or 'structural participation'

(2011: 68). Content-related participation involves programme production; the selection, provision, and scheduling of programmes; and the availability of technical resources to ordinary people. Structural participation involves participation in the structuring of the station, such as the election of those leading it, policy making for the station, its management, and financing (Carpentier, 2011). Whilst these are specific forms of participation, this chapter shows how a specific group of women became involved in the structure of their listening associations, on one hand, and contributed to the radio output, on the other.

According to Melkote (1991: 191), participation avoids top-down reductionist development approaches and instead allows 'people who are objects of policy [...] to be involved in the definition, design, and execution of the development process'. If individuals are given the opportunity to take part in these processes, they can talk about their own experiences of the problems they encounter and how awareness-raising could be optimised to benefit their communities. Participation can, therefore, empower communities through inclusion at the grassroots level. However, to achieve this, media—or radio in this case—'must be justified by the terms of the needs and interests of recipients and not exclusively in terms of those of the media organisations, professional media workers or advertisers' (McQuail, 1987: 122). Community radio stations such as Radio Scout, the focus of this chapter, act as a participatory space allowing members of historically disadvantaged or marginalised groups to deliberate issues that affect them and their community.

The way in which the women discussed here use and become involved in radio's communication flows to gain a previously unheard voice supports key components of participatory communication theory, as summarised by Figueroa et al. (2002: 11):

> The process and content of communication is owned by community; communication gives a voice to previously unheard community members; communities become their own change agents; the communication process is characterized by debate and negotiation on issues that affect community; emphasis is placed on outcomes that go beyond individual behaviour to widely recognized social needs.

The Role of Community Radio

The World Association of Community Broadcasters (AMARC) defines community radio as 'one that offers service to the community in which it is located or to which it broadcasts, while promoting the participation of its community in the radio' (O'Sullivan et al., 1998: 213). It has been widely discussed as a form of participation (Berrigan, 1979; Forde, 1997; Forde et al., 2002; Fraser & Estrada, 1998, 2001; Lennie & Tacchi, 2013; Milan, 2008; Myers, 2008) and within an African context (Fraser & Estrada, 2002; Manyozo, 2012; Myers, 2011). It provides the environment for participatory communication, empowering 'ordinary people to freely share or exchange information, and to reach consensus on what they want to do, what they want done, and how to do it' (Melkote, 1991: 191). Servaes likens community radio to a rhizome, promoting dialogue among those involved in the development process and building linkages or networks of relationships (2003), while Tabing (2002: 9) defines community radio as a station 'that is operated in the community, for the community, about the community and by the community'. It is Gumucio-Dagron's (2001) observation about community radio's empowering ability that is particularly relevant here, in that it allows ordinary people to become active producers of information and opinion rather than mere passive recipients. However, for listeners to be involved, they do not need to be owners of the radio stations. By design, community radio is operated on a non-profit basis for non-profitable purposes (Fraser & Estrada, 2001), and ownership can take multiple forms. They can be initiated by community members themselves, by NGOs working in communities (Mtimde et al., 1998: 15), by civil society organisations, or by the local government operating in the area (Rennie, 2006). Although wholly owned by communities, many rely on contributions from external bodies to keep them financially afloat (Fraser & Estrada, 2001). Community radios can promote empowerment among listeners by organising visits and talks by NGOs and supporting their initiatives, encouraging participation and allowing radio to provide an enabling environment and space for communities to discuss, debate and better understand the challenges they face and take action. They also enable women to support each other and learn from each other's actions and the opposition and challenges they face through the creation of radio listening associations.

What Are Listening Associations?

Radio listening associations or clubs are defined as 'a small listening and discussion group that meets regularly to receive a special radio programme, which the members then discuss' (Rogers et al., 1977 cited in Manyozo, 2012: 29). They act as an extension of community radio, rippling their effect throughout community members and encouraging and reinforcing their active participation in community events. Rather than limiting the radio's effect to the level of the listener, listening associations ask the listener to take this further and pass on knowledge, newly acquired via the radio programmes or group discussions, to include those not in the association and particularly, as we will see below, to those without radios or unable to listen. Low levels of education among many listeners means that many will have difficulty grasping certain concepts and therefore become empowered by discussing them in groups, sharing information, and pooling knowledge (Held, 2006).

Community radio contributes to this communication process, broadening its scope beyond the provision of broadcasts to logistical support, informal training, and structural support (see, for example, Mhagama's study on radio listening clubs in Malawi (2015)). In doing so, interdependence emerges between the community radio station and its listening association, as the latter gives feedback about what their members want to hear, thus gaining a voice. The desire for more information on income-generating activities, for example, was strong among the women I would chat with at Radio Scout. Many were reliant on their husband's incomes, which were either meagre, not shared, or non-existent, especially if husbands had migrated to seek seasonal employment. The women were interested in hearing about the trades that other women practised: 'some are involved making shea butter (*beurre de karité*), others are learning to sew, this is the type of activity that women do and that we want to hear about' (RW1). This feedback does not stop at the level of the community radio but is filtered back to their providers, in this case Studio Kalangou and to other larger broadcasters who purchase airtime. Broadcasters on multiple levels, therefore, receive feedback from communities. Community radio plays a central communication role connecting the various players involved, aiding social change through empowerment, inclusion, and participation (Girard, 2007). It bridges the gap between its listeners and its own suppliers and between various associations and its sub-associations, so they are not (and do not feel) isolated. The participatory flow of information is

reinforced, exerting power over and influencing external NGOs that also determine the content of awareness-raising information.

Radio listening clubs and associations are often formalised two-way endeavours whereby the radio stations, maybe in conjunction with NGOs or external organisations, train members in basic radio production and give them access to equipment. The clubs then discuss their community needs and problems, and these are recorded, edited, and converted into programmes with responses from various experts and policy makers for broadcast. The formalised club then discusses the broadcast and provides feedback on the extent to which their needs have been addressed. This approach provides community members not only with structural participation in radio but also with content-related participation by ensuring a way in which the topics of main importance to them are foregrounded, which might not have been the case had the choice of subject been left up to others. Formalised radio listening clubs have been discussed in various African contexts and regions; see, for example, studies by Banda (2007), Ojedele (2016), Manda (2015) Manyozo (2005), Mchakulu (2007), and Mhagama (2015).

Less formal approaches also exist that are equally worthy and empowering and may be more closely associated with women (Heywood & Ivey, 2021b), building on existing networks or associations (Heywood & Ivey, 2021a). Listening associations or gatherings may be set up by local radios as a space for ordinary people to participate in public life. They enable members to discuss radio programmes, understand them and explain their relevance to others, cascade information throughout the community, raise awareness and increase a sense of unity and solidarity. This can be through collective organisations or associations or through *tontines* or savings groups, which are examples of cultural, social, and economic solidarity (Bruchhaus, 2016). As discussed in Chap. 3 on women's financial empowerment, *Tontines* were first created in Niger by CARE International (2017) and were called Matu Masa Dubara (MMD), which can be translated as 'Women on the Move'. Acting as a major driver of women's economic empowerment and boosting financial inclusion, '*tontines*' were designed as groups of poor rural women contributing small weekly amounts of money to a collective fund to access loans for different purposes (small income-generating activities, special occasions, and celebrations). Thus, while it is true that the associations' activities are oriented, at their origin, around radio, they extend significantly beyond just 'listening' (Banda, 2007: 132). Communities use the radio association as a starting point to

facilitate discourse in various topic areas, involving audiences and encouraging them to contribute to the public sphere.

Listening in Niger is 'formalised' or 'structured' in collective spaces called *fadas*, which are informal gathering places and part of the street culture where unemployed men gather to while away the hours, socialise, play cards, listen to radio, and drink tea (Masquelier, 2019). However, these are predominantly masculine spaces, particularly popular among male youth, leaving women to assemble in less formal associations or impromptu gatherings. *Fadas* populate the streets in Niamey and, walking to gatherings and FGDs, I would be welcomed into the spaces these groups had claimed for themselves. Each *fada* would mark its turf by graffitiing its name or symbol on compound walls or, more flamboyantly, with painted low-wall breeze block structures, which gained them greater street status. One group of youngsters vaunted their freshly painted red and white 3-meter square fiefdom, emblazoned with *Junior Fatal Show* (in English) and the acronym J.F.S. (Fig. 6.1). This was theirs, they said—a grandiose but also desperate claim given their economic precarity. They were less vocal when teased about the *fada's* symbol—a silhouette of a masked fighter with crossed assault rifles with 'danger' inscribed below—and laughed self-consciously as their tough street culture façade crumbled .

Women tend to gather in women-only associations they have created, rather than mixed associations, which provide a 'time and space' for them to critically and collectively examine their lives. These associations allow members to enter into deliberative dialogues on women-related topics, which are dismissed by men because of their own stereotyping but about which they show great curiosity. As the power of a group is greater than that of an individual, the ensuing collective power (power *with*) can reinforce a feeling of self-confidence among women. Experiencing the same oppression in the face of male dominance, women's empowerment depends on both public collective solidarity and greater self-belief in private spaces (Kabeer, 1999). The benefit of association membership, be it formalised or not, thus extends to improvements in the quality of relations domestically and to the respect paid to women (by husbands) as carriers of knowledge acquired via radio and applied to their own circumstances.

The chapter can now discuss the women mentioned at the start and the case of Radio Scout, a community radio station near Niamey and its listening associations. Drawing on the many examples they provided, it demonstrates how, on the one hand, women are brought into the decision-making

Fig. 6.1 Junior Fatal Show's base

process through collective organisation, challenging power exerted *'over'* them, and, on the other hand, how women have gained public recognition on various levels through membership of listening associations or their sub-groups, as individuals, knowledge purveyors, and awareness raisers gaining community status and authority. It goes on to question changes to individual and collective consciousness, both for association members and for women and men in the community, and whether this can be sustainable.

However, before doing so, my own positionality, mentioned in the Introduction, should be recalled. By the time of these meetings to discuss the new listening association, I had already met many of the women several times. Whilst they were used to international and local NGOs coming to talk to them, having a Western researcher focus on them was a novelty. I was aware that this placed considerable responsibility on me in retelling their stories and experiences. I was coming from a white privileged educated background from the Global North; I was the other, the outsider. I

could not identify with their experiences beyond what they told me, and I acknowledge my own implicit and explicit biases and the power dynamics involved. Whilst we could exchange on having children, our shared experiences were limited. However, we appeared to have established a relationship of trust; those in the Main Association based at Radio Scout stated after initial visits, 'you said you'd come back, that you'd be back at the end of the year, and you have. We've waited for you and have gathered our thoughts'. I was also aware that they attributed the very idea of creating this listening association to my first focus group discussions with them. They were evidently keen to tell me how well the association and its subgroups were progressing. Social desirability bias, or the 'tendency to say things which place the speaker in a favourable light' (Nederhof, 1985: 264), had to be considered, and attempts to counter this bias were made through lengthy conversations with the women together, leading to contradictions, confirmations, and complementary information. However, being an 'outsider' in this way also allowed interviewees to speak more freely than had a local researcher led the conversations, who might have been in a position of authority, exerting their own power, or been in a position to judge, or who may have had assumed knowledge and therefore would not have been given so many details. Avoiding such biases is aspirational; nonetheless, this project made all attempts to place everyone involved in the discussions at ease, avoid judging, and allow them to express themselves freely and at length.

Radio Scout and Its Women's Listening Associations

Radio Scout is located in the district of Koira Tegui, meaning 'new village' in the outskirts of Niamey. In 1989, it was forcibly relocated to the extreme northern edge of the city from the site chosen for the construction of the Stade Omnisport (Stade Seyni Kountché). Its new location was targeted to relieve the city centre of pockets of poverty mainly comprising round thatched-roofed huts, presenting a serious fire risk (Gilliard, 2005). Displaced residents were given land titles, as were the many people with disabilities, particularly those with blindness and leprosy, who were moved to this area (Hungerford, 2012). Despite attracting attention from many international aid organisations, extreme poverty in the neighbourhood escalated, and it gained its current reputation for large numbers of beggars and high crime rates. Unemployment is high, particularly among youth,

and Radio Scout, the district's community radio, is an important focal point, uniting the community and raising awareness.

The radio broadcasts from a series of one-storey flat-roofed buildings accessed from a labyrinth of dusty alleyways crowded with traders, *fadas*, goats wandering aimlessly, children running in and out of buildings, caring for siblings, or rolling car tyres. Walking through the corrugated iron gate, the chaos of the journey disappears, and a spacious red-brick courtyard opens out. A single tree in the centre of the yard surrounded by stacks of plastic chairs and rickety wooden benches provides much-needed shade for associations and other groups to meet. Around the L-shaped courtyard, opposite the radio building, is a library with an impressive selection of children's reading books and activity tables for scout meetings. Radio Scout, which provides a haven of peace from the bustle of life in this deprived *quartier,* was created in 2013 by the Scouts Association in Niger but had to wait two years to obtain full authorisation. It started its activities in Koira Tegui on 1 August 2015 and was officially launched on 29 November financed by the Scouts Association of Luxembourg. Its origins were in a competition launched by the Ministère de la Jeunesse and the Institut de formation et d'information et de communication (IFTIC). The 20 ambitious young competition winners were offered the opportunity to be trained as journalists and create and run a radio station. Not knowing much about community radio, they were sent to Senegal to learn about transformational leadership and how to motivate their community and encourage it to take ownership of their radio. The journalists sought to create links between the community and the radio station and raise awareness about the various problems the community was facing to encourage them not only to want change but also to become agents of that change.

Having set up listening clubs, leading to community members wanting to take part in the broadcasts and becoming active themselves, Radio Scout became the heart of a community working from all directions to everyone's benefit (funders, organisations, youth, men and women, those at the station). One of its strengths, as with many community radios, is the energy of its 12 *animateurs/ animatrices*—men and women presenters—who are volunteers at the radio station with only their travel costs covered. The *animateurs/ animatrices* receive training from Radio Scout on how to present a radio programme and on the topics they discuss in their own programmes. They provide the vital link between the villages in rural areas where they were born and neighbouring areas, those working at Radio Scout and correspondents at Studio Kalangou and other larger radio

stations in the capital. They cascade information down the chain to ensure that the information broadcast to those in the rural villages is relevant to them and to pass information up the chain from villagers for local broadcast via Radio Scout and even national broadcast via Studio Kalangou.

While Radio Scout provides a community service and awareness raising, as a community radio in Niger, it does not have the right to broadcast news and therefore has to work with external broadcasters, such as Studio Kalangou, who, in turn, pay for the airtime to broadcast news. Radio Scout is a member of CN-Racom, the National Coordination of Community Radios in Niger, a network of 184 community radios throughout Niger. It is a non-profit organisation but receives finance through awareness 'spots' or awareness-raising publicity and advertisements. Radio Scout receives payment for broadcasting pre-produced spots or for producing and then broadcasting them, with themes predominantly focusing on health, protection, education, and peace. Awareness raising is central to Radio Scout, and *animateurs/ animatrices* are used to introduce the short spots on air to reinforce the message they contain.

Radio Scout broadcasts daily from 7 am to 10 pm in Zarma, the most widely spoken national language, with the most popular slots being 8 am–10 am (particularly amongst women) and 8 pm–10 pm. Given the popularity of these slots, Radio Scout uses them to foreground specific themes to educate the community. Operating in a particularly disadvantaged area, this community radio stressed that they are more than just a radio and that community interaction and involvement are central. Being the only community radio for approximately 30 km,[1] Radio Scout is proud of the responsibility it bears for its community. While Radio Scout is in an urban area, it broadcasts to rural zones, including the listening association sub-groups discussed below. Levels of poverty are high in all these areas and in rural communities where a lack of electricity and tap water is common. Women carry the burden of caring for the family,

> There isn't a single one of them who has anything to do that can make money, and there are times when all the men leave as part of the rural exodus, and they are the only ones left. So sometimes, even if the child gets sick, they can't pay for medicine or provide for themselves. Only bundles of

[1] A private radio, Niger 24, exists nearer Niamey but they are a profit-making entity with more time to produce adverts on all topics. Radio Scout stresses that its aim is awareness-raising and education.

> millet are brought to them to put on the roof, so that's all there is. You get some, you grind it up, you make porridge, and you eat. So that's all there is. That's the daily routine. (Zouera Nouhou Hamidou, Radio Scout Director, 2019)

Eighty percent of their programmes concern youth and women, not because the station excludes men but because, as Zouera Nouhou Hamidou, the Director, states, the term 'youth' includes all both men and women, and because when awareness-raising targets women, men are affected too, and families will benefit. Radio Scout boasts an active mixed listenership that regularly rings the station with comments, suggestions, and requests. The links that Radio Scout has forged with youth in this deprived area are not only significant but welcome. Each week, for example, through a programme called '*Fada fadente*', *fadas* or groups of mostly male youth have been successfully encouraged to contribute to the community to the extent that they now take turns to patrol areas in the district where there are high levels of delinquency and armed robbery. Theft was a specific problem frequently raised among the women who recounted that they could not keep anything with them in their houses because people would simply get in and take it. One *animateur* uses his programme, *Kuara Mo Zadam*, which focuses on villages and village life, to raise awareness among all listeners but especially among youth. Rather than sitting around drinking tea and playing cards in *fadas*, he encourages them to go and learn a trade and become active in the community but also to join the activities at the radio and train to be a presenter. In doing so and in training youth, they aim to ensure the sustainability of the radio station in the event that they can no longer present the programmes themselves.

The station runs a successful and popular mixed listening association that organises weekly awareness raising activities for listeners and when they can discuss broadcasts and feed ideas back to the radio for future programmes. The association has its own weekly hour-long slot, allowing listeners to learn more about its activities and therefore its awareness raising. In December 2019, the topic focused on Harmattan, the cold season between November and March, and the need to wrap up children to prevent them from catching colds. Whilst temperatures could feel balmy during the day, possibly reaching 30 °C, they could fall to 15–16 C in the evening. Given poverty in the district, colds can prove costly and even fatal for families without the means to buy medicine. Information was targeted at mothers raising awareness about how to protect their children and at

school principals encouraging them to prevent people selling iced juice to children as they were getting ill as a result.

In contrast to Manyozo (2005), who stated that women dominated the radio listening clubs in his study, the reach of this mixed listening association was limited, as many women were prohibited from attending by male members of their families simply because the association was mixed. Women were therefore deprived of access to information, and this information, in turn, was not passed on to families, reinforcing a circle of disempowerment. As a result of focus groups run by this research project, a women-only listening association was set up in summer 2018 to create a 'time and space' for women, allowing them to critically and collectively examine their lives to become empowered, linking them to others in similar situations. Over 80 women assembled in Radio Scout's dusty compound to attend its inaugural session, voting in a president and vice-president, determining subscription levels, and setting an agenda for meetings in a women-only environment (Fig. 6.2). This formed the main women's association, and surveys of listeners' telephone calls to the station were used to identify additional villages within Radio Scout's reach to create sub-groups. This extended the association's enabling environment to women at the village level who were unable to fund transport to come to the centre while also focusing discussions on issues of local relevance. Each group, on all levels, has 10 members, including a president and other officers. More sub-groups are planned. Members of the main association and sub-groups collaborate both in choosing which awareness-raising themes broadcast by Radio Scout will be discussed during weekly or fortnightly listening club meetings and in encouraging activities on that theme beyond the meetings. The association, named *Groupement féminin Kalangou* [the Kalangou women's group] (GFK), is now legally registered in accordance with the law.[2] According to the GFK's statutes, its aim is to 'improve the lives of women in Koira Tegui'. It has the right to collect money from its members, elect officers and operate as an association with branches.

[2] Ruling No. 84–06 of 1 March 1984 on the Regime of Associations in Niger, as amended and supplemented by Law No. 91–006 of 20 May 1991.

Fig. 6.2 Groupement féminin Kalangou [the Kalangou women's group]

The Need for a Leader

Although the role of the community remains central to the ongoing success of Radio Scout and while the process of empowerment must take place collectively (Kabeer, 1999), this must not underplay the essential role of a motivator in setting up community radio projects and 'to introduce into it notions of community ownership, management and programming' (Banda, 2006: 3). In other words, however important it is that community members—and particularly women in the case of GFK—own and drive the project, someone had to initiate it; the women could not have achieved this without a leader. Whilst power can be perceived as negative and can be disempowering, certain sources of power can enable individuals to overcome systemic powerlessness (Batliwala, 2013), and once united with those of other individuals creating power *with*, it can work to reinforce collective action and trigger an empowering environment. This motivating force can be an organisation or NGO or, in our case, an individual.

Exemplifying the positive role of individual 'power *to*' or the power to drive collectivity and the ambition to see a group achieve what it is capable of is Zouera Nouhou Hamidou, director of Radio Scout. Zouera is a journalist by training and has been part of the Scout Association since she was 11. One of the young journalists in the Ministry of Youth competition mentioned above, she quietly and modestly drives the success of the station. She encourages listeners to see the value of radio in their community and take ownership of it:

> We have done everything we can for the community to love radio and take ownership of Radio Scout. And that's what happened. There was the creation of listening clubs, especially the initial mixed listening club where listeners were so appreciative because it was a poor neighbourhood. People didn't think anybody was thinking about them, who could do something for them. We have really built up a bond between the community and us scouts and also the radio staff. We've built solidarity between the community, and we've also made them aware of various problems they are facing, and they also want to see change in that sense. (Zouera Nouhou Hamidou, 2019)

She attributes the respect she has gained amongst those she works with and those in the community to being a woman. Young people see her as a maternal figure, there to advise them even asking her to make a contribution to their group. She is also trusted and, in contrast to a man, she is not viewed as a risk of wasting their money. This level of trust and leadership also emerged among both the main women's listening association and its sub-groups. The women listeners would talk openly to her, as a woman, about their needs, enabling her to organise relevant training and networking opportunities between groups. As the main contact within the radio station and as the principal motivator, she is aware that to be effective and sustainable, the women's association and sub-groups need encouragement to set their own collective agenda:

> I continue to talk to them about the links between them and the other groups. We're doing everything we can so that they can travel, even if it's just two or three of them from here to meet the women from the other group, to strengthen and exchange with each other to ensure the group's continuity. I know there are women who are ready for us to leave them alone but if we don't do anything, if we don't help them, they might leave. So, from time to time, we have to be in contact with them so that the group can continue growing. (Zouera Nouhou Hamidou, 2019)

Structural Participation and Membership

The leadership role extends beyond motivation and includes the administration of the groups. To operate legally, the association had to apply for registration, which, in turn, allowed them to set up a bank account for the weekly or monthly contributions. A safe place to deposit the money was essential in this district where crime rates are so high. This legal recognition gives the association further status within the community.

Structurally, the group comprises the main association, which is based at the Radio Scout premises in Koira Tegui, and currently (in 2021) four sub-groups, two in rural areas and a fourth in an urban area.[3] Each has a formal structure with a president and officers. In some cases, these roles are more developed, with officers being appointed to organise meetings or arrange events. In the Urban Association, for example, they organise exchanges with groups that are not associated with radio, enabling them to pool knowledge. The respective presidents and officers meet informally at ceremonies (marriages, baptisms, etc.). Each group is restricted to 10 members and passes on information from group discussions to non-members. Some women who attended the inaugural meeting of the main group became members of sub-groups because of the limit on group numbers for the main association. Whilst the rules on membership are clear, frustration amongst those not able to join was evident during the focus group discussions leading to Zouera pursuing her leadership role, explaining that they could create additional sub-groups, without any conflicts of interest, expanding GFK and organising activities amongst them.

Membership selection differed from group to group, with this inconsistency demonstrating how new the concept of radio associations was in this women's community. Members of the Urban Association sub-group, for example, were simply selected as they were all neighbours and had already formed the habit of discussing radio programmes together. One of the groups in Rural Association 2 appeared to have adopted the most democratic approach, as they selected the 10 group members so that each

[3] For this chapter, focus groups were held with members of each of the four groups within GFK. Two are in urban locations, two are rural. The groups have been coded, for anonymity purposes, as R = rural, U = Urban, M = Men, W = Women with numbers to indicate if they are in the first or second rural location, and first or second group within that location. For example, R2W2 = Rural location 2, women group 2. The locations are named the Main Association (based at Radio Scout), Urban Association, Rural Association 1, and Rural Association 2.

'concession' or group of households had a representative. This more democratic selection approach also ensured a fair and reliable dissemination of the information broadcast via radio. Not all villagers had a radio set or access to one, so it was the duty of group members to go back to their respective households and repeat information that they had either heard on the radio themselves or that had been discussed in the group: 'They say that when they meet on Fridays and when each one goes home, they talk about what they have discussed with their neighbours, those in the vicinity, and the women who were not able to come. So, they share with each other, and if there are others who hadn't listened, this is an opportunity for them to find out…' (R2W1). The associations are, therefore, fulfilling an essential role that radio cannot by passing on information to those outside its reach.

Membership was also dependent on women obtaining permission from their husbands. Some men encouraged their wives to join, being radio listeners themselves, yet others refused because, according to the women, they refused to understand the benefits of information and raising awareness. Obtaining permission was a gradual process,

> They say that they had to discuss it with their husbands because they need to show the men the advantages of radio and the programmes they listen to on radio so that they could help them [the husbands] change their behaviour and so that the husbands would let them join the group. They first had to make the husbands aware of the importance of the radio. (R2W1)

Once achieved, this would build empowerment in the sphere of women's lives, affecting close relations.

All the groups had similar objectives, but the sub-groups felt they could benefit from developing closer ties with the main group. The Urban Association is geographically close to the main group based at Radio Scout, so members can regularly meet, and the sub-group members can even attend the main association's Sunday meetings. The rural sub-groups stated that they wanted to meet the main association's president and its members so that they could form effective bonds of solidarity. They also wanted support from the main group to help them look for partners, perhaps NGOs or banks, to promote learning about and running small income-generating activities (R2W1). Whilst the members were not instrumental in setting up the community radio, they played an essential role in setting up the association, not only acquiring a sense of ownership

and increased self-belief in their abilities but also newly found status within the community and the ability to use the association as an amplifier for their opinions and ideas.

The prevailing aim across all the groups was to encourage and promote solidarity among women and to raise awareness of women-related topics (breastfeeding, family spacing, attending clinics, and so on). As a group, they used radio phone-ins to give their opinions and advice. Many also said that this would be their opportunity to have their voices heard and stand up for their rights. To achieve this, they wanted to use their membership of the groups to encourage other women to listen to the radio and understand its benefits. They would use every opportunity, be it during evening chats with family members or when walking with other women to the well, to empower those without radios or phones by passing the information they had received.

The desire to pass on relevant and important information to contribute to building collective knowledge also extended to youth. Female genital mutilation (FGM) and its consequences were often quoted as an example of a topic that youth did not understand. There is a low prevalence of FGM in Niger, with the majority of cases being carried out by traditional practitioners. Group members reported that people in their community were not aware it was still being practised. Passing on information is, therefore, a central aim. Encouraging non-listeners to try to listen enabled them to become better informed, breaking the circle of disempowerment. Even men are listening more to factual information (not hearsay), improving the lives of women.

Collective Power or 'Power *with*'

Members said that while it was beneficial to gain awareness through broadcasts and discussions, the principal advantage provided by group membership was the resultant solidarity among women. Many of the women I would speak to were already members of other groups, not connected to radio, but they had been attracted by the solidarity that they had heard about in the Main Association. They said that they had been resigned to men always being always at the forefront and leaders in society but that now this could be them too, supporting Agarwal's (2001: 7) statement that 'functioning collectively in women's own interests is a central component in empowerment'. Taking this further, members of the main group said that they recognised that a change had taken place amongst them:

> Now they are in a group, they can exchange among themselves. Before, they didn't exchange so much, but thanks to the group, they come together and speak on the radio and even speak within their own entourage. They now see themselves as women who perhaps have the right to inform others about what they have found out. (U2W)

They were also able to use the status of being a member of the main group to influence women who did not habitually listen to the radio programmes and empower those affected. The President of the Main Association gave me one clear example:

> The day before yesterday, because of the group and what I had learned, one of our acquaintances was going to give her underage daughter away to be married, so I consulted the families. I went to her home and told her, 'I learnt from Studio Kalangou that they say never to give children in marriage and that there is even a law against this and that if you do, there are penalties. You could be locked up for that'. So, because I made the woman aware, because of this, the child was not given away to be married.

The groups' influence extended to their husbands and the men in their communities, with many women stating that they had changed their husband's conduct by bringing information home. As Young (1988: 198) asserts, 'both men and women need to change if future society is to be more harmonious than in the past'. Men, in turn, were then able to influence other men who were more sceptical about the benefits of radio. This proved effective as, the women said, men understand each other amongst themselves better too (R2W2). By influencing the conduct of men, the main decision-makers in their lives, women indirectly promote their own empowerment.

Decision-Makers and Relational Changes

> The husbands also acknowledged that their own behaviour and understanding had been changed by their wife or wives and the information they brought home from the groups. They say: it's true, if our wives come home, we discuss things with them because there are programmes about women, we listen to what they have discussed, and we too get to understand the awareness messages. If a husband slips up, his wife will talk to him about what she has heard and tell him, 'What you are doing is not what we were told. We have been made aware of this'. (R2M1)

The group members' husbands that we spoke to perceived themselves as educators for women and youth, holding greater wisdom and knowledge than their wives:

> He said that there are women who ask them questions about the programmes, so what they have understood they pass on to women. So that they are on the same wavelength. There are even children who ask questions about the programmes that are on. (RM1)

The men were vague about what women talked about in the groups but approved of the groups' dynamism, as it gave their wives confidence and awareness (RM1), potentially reducing their burden as educators.

The husbands were also appreciative of the change brought about in their wives after becoming listening association members, yet any benefits from the listening associations were linked to improvements in their own lives, with little attention being paid to increased levels of empowerment among their wives. They noted that:

> awareness has been raised among women. They used to let the men go to work and then just do nothing. But now the women have organised themselves into the listening associations, they have shown the men that even women can get together to find ways to help men or women. (RM2)

Among the GFK members, it was evident that the associations, particularly at the sub-group level, would extend support not only to each other (the 10 members) but also to others within their community. To be a member of the main association and to benefit from the credit facility or the abovementioned *tontines,* weekly subscriptions are needed. The women in one of the rural groups, for example, contributed a maximum of 100 cfa [£00.13] weekly, and others contributed up to 250 cfa [£00.35]. This was collected and managed by the group's treasurer, and loans could be made to members who then made regular repayments to reimburse the group. The Urban Association made weekly contributions of 200 cfa [£00.27] and made a draw, and the chosen name would receive the money that week to start an activity. It then rotated until everyone had had a chance. Their aim was to extend this to include more women to increase its inclusivity but also to increase the amount of shared money. Some commented that while they could use the loan to start a small business selling roasted peanuts, for example, the amount was so little, as there were so

few of them, that they might prefer to use the loan to pay for something to eat for the family. Another member of the main association added that she had borrowed 50,000 cfa (approximately £68) to pay for sewing materials to set up a small tailoring business. She has been able to repay the loan while continuing her activities. In this case, the women who had previously been deprived of access to financial resources gained power over their economic situation through this collective income generation. The subscription system, however, could have proved exclusive, as not all the women had the means to contribute, risking a narrowing of the scope and potential of the association. Contributions were not compulsory in all the sub-groups. Instead, they invest in a more transformative agenda, raising awareness, challenging inequality, promoting inclusion, and improving women's voice in the public sphere.

Men also commented on the microcredit or self-help aspects of the listening associations and how their wives' way of thinking has altered as a result. 'They no longer wait for us to earn the extra money for little things. They do it themselves. So that's a point in our favour' (UM1). Whilst the men acknowledged that there is a limit to how much their wives can contribute financially, they approved of the microcredit as it occupied the women, perhaps selling pancakes or soup. Rather than appearing threatened by the women becoming more economically independent, the husbands acknowledged that the financial empowerment enjoyed by their wives was to their benefit lightening their own load. According to the men, collective strength among the women reinforced their knowledge and understanding and, therefore, their confidence to stand up for their rights. Discussions in the listening groups, therefore, reinforced the awareness messages broadcast by radio.

Inclusion

Inclusion is an important objective of the GFK associations. Listeners could be excluded from discussions not only by not having the means to be a member (also the upper limit on the number of members was restrictive—36 women initially wanted to join Rural Association 1[4]) but also because of social factors. Many women could not listen to broadcasts

[4] Members of this listening association were originally from different villages but now live in the same village after they married. At the time of the study, additional sub-groups were being created to accommodate those excluded.

because they were engaged in their socially reproductive chores at the time of the broadcasts or, more simply, because they did not possess a radio. In Rural Association 1, for example, at the time of the study, there was no electricity despite being so close to the capital. Solar power was the energy source and was used to recharge phones to listen to radio programmes. However, the charge available to the women listeners I met, after the men had charged their equipment, was not sufficient to allow them to listen to the whole programme broadcast by Studio Kalangou via Radio Scout. Many would listen to one mobile phone together, replacing it with the next when the first battery had run out, highlighting both the importance of information broadcast by radio to these remote communities and the social nature of radio. Some managed to record the broadcasts, but the situation was exacerbated by the fact that often, even if their phones were charged, they were with their husbands, or children or cooking and were not available to listen. The listening associations reinforced collective power (or power *with*) by cascading information that members had heard on the radio and discussed as a group to women (and men) who were unable to listen to the broadcasts.

The sub-groups would meet either weekly or fortnightly, with the main association meeting monthly on Sundays, a day chosen to accommodate working members who could not attend during the week. The Rural Association 1 sub-group, which was created shortly after the main association, meets every two weeks on Thursdays at 1 pm for an hour prior to the start of prayers and rotates around members' homes. Another group (R2W2) is called to meetings by the president on Fridays at 3 pm after prayers. This president was elected to the position by the other group members, as she no longer has small children to deal with and 'she is the eldest in the village, she is the one who, when she talks, everyone listens to her. So that's why they chose her', illustrating existing power hierarchies, this time within women's groups and collectives and that women are far from being homogeneous. The Urban Association meets on Thursday evenings at 5 pm and, where possible, they aim, with support from Radio Scout, to invite people to visit them to raise awareness. The groups' presidents then play the role described by Manyozo (2012) of 'participant-facilitator'. They would lead the discussion and encourage members to state not only why a given programme is relevant to their lives but also how they could learn from it and pass on any learning to those outside the group, benefiting the community (Mhagama, 2015: 112).

Content-Related Participation

Being in a women-only environment, the listening associations have been able to discuss, and pass on, information about various women-related topics that they considered to be taboo, not readily discussed in mixed environments, or that are determined by men and social norms leading to the disempowerment of women, such as child marriage, divorce, menstruation, or FGM. Whilst the topic choice is important, so is who makes that choice. It is important that it is the group members who identify their own needs during the discussions rather than having that decision imposed upon them. The ability to define one's own needs and priorities is an essential part of the empowerment process.

Many in these communities were of child-bearing age, so discussions on broadcasts that covered family spacing and pre and postnatal check-ups were encouraged. Group members would go on to discuss these topics at home with daughters, raising their awareness, but not with their sons, as these subjects 'didn't concern them'. This presented the clear risk that, by depriving the next male generation of information about 'women's issues', the group was perpetuating its own oppression. In the rural groups, three topics emerged as being of interest both for broadcasts and subsequent group discussions: the lack of electricity, the lack of local secondary schools, and youth, both girls and boys, who had dropped out of school. They considered this last theme especially concerning because boys 'who are at home, they don't do anything, they don't have a trade to learn, they are just like that, staying at home, hanging around, loitering and doing nothing' (UW). The importance of Radio Scout's community role in encouraging male youth to seek a trade and even become involved at the station becomes clearer in this context.

The issue of well water as a suggestion for radio broadcasts initially appeared disconnected from the more regularly mentioned women's subjects, yet the link soon became clear. The village in question had no tap water, and it was the women's responsibility to fetch the water from the wells, some of which were very deep. If the woman was pregnant, it was this that threatened the baby. There were several women who had lost their babies because of this, first because the wells are often at a significant distance from their homes and second because the wells are very deep, so drawing the water and then carrying it home put enormous strain on their bodies and the baby. By tackling the issue of drinking water, women's load could be lightened, and the health of their unborn babies improved.

Many of the topics that the various group members suggested for discussion on radio and within the groups centred around economic difficulties. For example, in urban areas, insecurity, theft, and general delinquency were the main areas of concern resulting from unemployment and poverty and insufficient schooling. There was a need to discuss activities for those who had dropped out of school early because: 'kids, when they aren't at school, they're just there at home, just hanging about. It is only during the rainy season that there are activities that they can do in the fields; otherwise, there's nothing for them to do' (R2W1). The importance of schooling for girls was highlighted. This is because girls would not leave the village or abandon their family, and the benefits of their education, in contrast to those of boys, would be felt by the community. Difficulties in accessing health care were also linked to insufficient money-making opportunities. Providing information on how to set up IGAs would solve many problems:

> There's a lack of income-generating activities. In the health centres, there are no medicines because in order to be able to gain access to them, for the doctor to consult a child or a woman, you have to pay 1,200 francs. And even if you can find this amount, and you pay to see the doctor, and you pay the 1200 francs, he can't treat you, there are no medicines, there's nothing. He will just give you another prescription to go and buy the medicine. (UW)

Radio, therefore, provides the space to trigger solidarity with the groups discussing which topics they would like to recommend to Radio Scout and ultimately to Studio Kalangou for inclusion on radio. Whilst they stated that there were too many local problems for them all to be suggested to Radio Scout, these main ones have since been discussed on air by Studio Kalangou.

The GFK listening associations faced numerous challenges. The lack of access to radio because of insufficient or no electricity, as already discussed, was disempowering for women when working as individuals, but when associated *with* other women, they were able to overcome these challenges through the association. Solidarity can overcome individual challenges through the sharing of information. GFK also faced challenges from the community. Women were reluctant to attend the initial meetings, as they were sceptical about the long-term survival of the association. Community sensitisation was needed for women to understand that the association could work and was for them, also highlighting the need for a strong

motivational leader to promote and encourage solidarity. The community needed convincing, as did the men, that the listening groups presented no threat rather that all would benefit, especially by tackling shared problems collectively. Additionally, one of the aims of being a listening association was to provide feedback to Studio Kalangou about past and future broadcasting. However, the women confessed that there were too many problems at the local level to determine which to pass back up to Studio Kalangou for coverage.

The GFK sub-groups supported empowerment at a micro level and influenced interactions between personal, collective, and relational dimensions of empowerment. However, this empowerment must not remain localised. Supporting Kabeer (1994: 262):

> The longer-term sustainability of empowerment strategies will depend on the extent to which they envision women struggling within a given set of policy priorities and the extent to which they empower them to challenge and reverse these priorities. It is only when the participation of poorer women goes beyond participation at the project level to intervening in the broader policy-making agenda that their strategic interests can become an enduring influence on the course of development.

This participatory approach to the collective represented by the GFK groups may be localised and context specific, which could restrict its empowering effect. This is why collaboration must be nurtured and extend beyond participation in the sub-groups to encourage involvement in policymaking. In this case, this could involve organising events at the level of the main association or with Radio Scout. By influencing structures at a higher level, it will empower women beyond their collective.

Conclusion

The 'time and space' created by the GFK listening association and its sub-groups allowed its members to examine their lives critically and collectively. Whilst away from men for significant amounts of their time, women, through their solidarity, developed a new consciousness, gained new knowledge, and enacted this knowledge. Moreover, the ripple effect of the information beyond group meetings reinforced empowerment among other women. Power *with* did not have boundaries but rather cascaded to those not in the group, without radios, or who needed help understanding

broadcasts. Rather than encountering male backlash, women were able to influence decision makers, with men appreciating their newfound confidence, particularly potential financial benefits. However, as Kabeer states (2008: 2), shifts in empowerment in 'individual women's lives do not necessarily translate into shifts in underlying structures of constraint'. This is supported by men's attitudes, as women's participation in the groups is perceived as being acceptable only because it is beneficial to men and might reduce their workload and family responsibilities. The benefits obtained by the women may empower them, but they appear to be working harder to the benefit of the family, while this extra work is, in fact, reducing that of their husbands.

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CHAPTER 7

Radio, Women IDPs, and Women Journalists

We pay much more attention to the human being, to the person we are talking to, even in the way we formulate the questions.
—Studio Yafa Journalist

Introduction

This final chapter brings together the various threads in this book. It builds on empowerment theories already discussed and intertwines them with concepts of trauma, emotional labour, moral injury, emotions and affect, and affective proximity by examining humanitarian radio journalism broadcast among internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Burkina Faso and the provision of practical responses to their needs. It considers how women journalists at Studio Yafa 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 the while supported by a Western media development (radio) organisation and its funders.

It first discusses the problems faced by women examined in previous chapters but now in extreme situations. It then examines how women journalists, by being both women and journalists, navigate social structures to gain access to and responses from IDP women (Fröhlich, 2016; Orgeret, 2016). It finally investigates the approaches taken by a media development NGO radio studio to best communicate with their IDP listeners but also advocate on their behalf. The chapter foregrounds radio's

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key attributes regarding accessibility through the many platforms made available to IDP communities. Given the context, the concept of empowerment here focuses more on survival, mental health, and trauma but also on the need to protect and care for family, hopes for education, and life in a new, potentially hostile, environment.

The chapter centres on a new series of 30-minute weekly broadcasts, called *Faso Yafa,* which was launched by Studio Yafa in Burkina Faso in October 2021, with the collaboration of, and funding from, UNHCR. The aim of the new series was to contribute to increasing the accessibility and reach of radio journalism within and from marginalised and isolated IDP and host communities. Studio Yafa broadcasts its general information programmes via radio partners throughout the country, and for *Faso Yafa,* it transmits via local community radio partners and loudspeakers in regions with high IDP populations. To report in and about these areas and populations, and not just to them, Studio Yafa's journalists needed access to these regions, and journalists in the regions needed access to a route to get their information out. Studio Yafa set up a group of 45 individuals, named '*correspondents*', the majority being young women, with whom they had worked previously in a project with the same target audience but providing information about COVID-19 (Fondation Hirondelle, 2022). They also created a series of '*points focaux*' [focal points], similar to listening groups, to provide regular feedback on the IDP-related broadcasts to Studio Yafa. The correspondents, who were not trained journalists, received basic training in interviewing and recording techniques and in community engagement and worked with a new team of humanitarian journalists based at the studio in the capital, Ouagadougou. The chapter, therefore, examines how radio as a structure can empower women, how the topics broadcast by the humanitarian team of journalists are vital for raising awareness, and how the psychological impact of reporting on these topics on journalists, and, therefore, on their output, must be considered.

Context

Burkina Faso is one of the world's poorest countries (UNDP, 2020) and is predominantly rural and agricultural. The combination of poverty, climate change, inter-community tensions, and a weak government has exacerbated the deteriorating security situation. According to the Council for Emergency Relief and Recovery (CONASUR), the government agency that collects data on displacement, the number of internally displaced

persons in Burkina Faso totalled 1,850,293 on 31 March 2022, representing almost 10% of the country's population (CONASUR, 2022), the majority being children and women. However, the disaggregated figures remain vague, as the population is constantly changing. There are an additional 20,000 Malian refugees that Burkina Faso has hosted since 2012 following the uprising there (Beogo et al., 2018; UNHCR, 2020). These migrant communities face immense challenges, such as lack of food, shelter, water, sanitation, school closures, and gender-based violence, all of which have been worsened by COVID-19. Furthermore, the provision of aid to IDP communities has been severely hampered by the security situation and the pandemic. Funding has steadily decreased, and humanitarian agencies have reduced access to affected communities, as they themselves are directly threatened, must avoid IEDs, and face government restrictions on movement and vehicles (Murphy, 2020). Extremist violence has been attributed to three main groups in the region: Islamic State in the Greater Sahel; Group for the Support of Islam and Muslims; and Ansarouls Islam. There are also self-defence militia groups (Leclercq & Matagne, 2020) and government and international forces. In January 2020, the government introduced laws to train and arm civilian volunteers, Volunteers for the Defense of the Homeland (VDP, *Volontaires pour la défense de la patrie*), to fight jihadist groups (Mednick, 2021), but the weapons were not delivered, and the volunteers became both perpetrators and victims of violence. In October 2022, Captain Ibrahim Traoré, who took power following the previous month's coup d'état, initiated a campaign to recruit an additional 50,000 volunteers (AFP, 2022). This, in turn, has impacted families of volunteers, as humanitarian agencies cannot provide aid to armed persons. The displaced communities are, therefore, trapped between jihadists, self-defence groups, and the state military, all of whom have committed atrocities and furthered internal displacement.

According to the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) (2022), women and children, comprising 80% of Burkina Faso's IDPs, are disproportionately affected. This is because many have been forced to flee their homes following the massacres of husbands and other male relatives or their forcible recruitment into armed groups. This increases the vulnerability of displaced women and girls. They are at increased risk of gender-based violence (Reliefweb, 2022a), and cases of food-for-sex are widespread, including from local community leaders apparently registering people for humanitarian aid (Mednick, 2021). Gender-based violence (GBV) is covered by the legal framework, but survivors rarely pursue legal

action because of shame, lack of money, and lack of family support. Furthermore, social norms justify and normalise domestic violence regardless of the security situation and resultant displacement. According to the OECD Development Centre (2018), 34% of the population in Burkina Faso agrees that husbands are justified in beating wives in certain circumstances.

While IDPs feel threatened by their new circumstances, they are also perceived to be a threat by host communities. Many women are now heads of households, resulting in them having to abandon their own education, impacting their futures and foregoing any associated privileges. In this patriarchal society, discriminatory social norms dominate. Women's freedom of movement is restricted, yet they remain obliged to perform all domestic tasks, including fetching water and firewood at increasing distances from the home. Women and young girls are given these tasks, as they are considered too dangerous for men to carry out because men are more likely targets of terrorist attacks. Women are, therefore, exposed to risks of sexual and physical attacks simply by going beyond the alleged safety of their compounds. They also suffer physical and sexual violence and an increased risk of early and forced marriage to ease families' financial burdens, and sexual exploitation is widespread (Reliefweb, 2022b). This suffering is exacerbated as these topics remain taboo. It is often considered better for women to remain silent about violence committed against them than face repudiation or rejection from families.

IPDs' living conditions are desperate, with women and children frequently being forced to beg to make ends meet. Their makeshift shelters are constructed from cardboard and tarpaulins and have no water taps or electricity. Stagnant rainwater forms puddles in and around shelters, spreading diseases such as malaria and diarrhoea. They receive financial, food, and material support from NGOs and social welfare services, yet the influx of displaced persons has meant that aid from humanitarian agencies is far from meeting demand. This is equally applicable to grants for school supplies and fees. To receive state aid, IDPs must also be in a commune where aid is paid or at a site recognised by the authorities. IDPs in the capital are not recognised by the authorities (Douce, 2021), as this has been perceived as a stigma against the authorities for not being able to protect its citizens (Dialma, 2002). IDPs may initially be well accepted by host communities, but pressure on vital resources such as water can be a source of dissension and tension (Fondation Hirondelle concept note 14–15). A recent study showed that according to IDPs, their greatest

priority was food aid, followed by financial assistance, security, and long-term resettlement (Yaméogo & Heywood, 2022; Heywood & Yaméogo, 2023). The study identified that IDPs needed information on these topics and wanted it in the form of radio news programmes, debates, and sketches. IDP communities need radio for multiple purposes: to gain recognition for their condition, to feel part of the population, to relay their own information, and to receive information, hear about their home villages, and receive educational broadcasts. As Tudesq (2003) asserted, 'as an instrument of popular education and social communication in community radio stations, radio is above all a means of rapid information and entertainment'. Therefore, attention must be paid to the information and communication plans and strategies that respond to the specific needs of the various groups of women IDPs, in other words, humanitarian journalism, which can be used to empower listeners but also as advocacy to aid and inform providers.

This chapter builds on existing empowerment theories and discusses them through the lens of humanitarian journalism, which Bunce et al. (2019, p. 3) define, very broadly, as the 'production of factual accounts about crises and issues that affect human welfare' and the associated trauma that journalists may suffer because of the tragedy and the consequences of the violence and conflict they cover. Humanitarian journalism has been widely researched but largely with a focus on reports on crises by foreign correspondents or outlets for Global North audiences (see Bunce et al., 2019; Scott et al., 2023). Similarly, associated trauma amongst journalists has been explored from the perspective of Western reporters when covering crisis or conflict abroad for home audiences (Feinstein & Starr, 2015; Feinstein et al., 2002; Osmann et al., 2021; Rentschler, 2009). There is also research into how humanitarian journalism is used for financial ends to ease the suffering of those in crisis or conflict (Chouliaraki, 2013; Franks, 2014; Moke & Ruther, 2015), but again, this targets absent Western audiences. This chapter moves away from this Western-centric reporting and instead examines an example of humanitarian journalism that provides a practical response to practical issues and its twofold approach: first, to inform an audience comprising the survivors of conflict or crisis, rather than distant, or 'absent' audiences, by journalists in the same country; and second, to use the information collected by the in-country journalists (the 'correspondents') as a source of advocacy to improve the humanitarian outcome of their audiences. The radio broadcasts in this chapter, therefore, target (a) IDP populations and host

communities who are very much present and (b) NGOs and aid agencies providing aid to these communities. They are written by journalists from the same country and even from the same affected communities.

The first approach—informing hard-to-reach communities in intervention zones—is critical on many levels, as it reduces isolation, informs rural and urban populations about each other, and provides a link between IDPs and their home villages (Heywood & Yaméogo, 2023; Yaméogo & Heywood, 2022) and between 'literate and illiterate populations, francophones and speakers of national languages' (Capitant, 2008: 192). It raises awareness of and potential solutions to certain topics in manners that are specific to IDP communities (social cohesion, shelter, GBV). It can, therefore, provide comfort to listeners in this case and, by providing expert opinion and advice, improve human welfare. This approach also foregrounds the key characteristics of radio that render it such a vital lifeline in the context of IDPs and affected communities, especially its many platforms and transmission methods (via community and commercial radio, through mobiles, Viamo,[1] solar-powered radio, loudspeakers, for example), increasing the accessibility and reach of broadcasts.

The second approach within humanitarian journalism centres around advocacy. While this has been used when targeting absent Western audiences to encourage financial or material donations and for larger-scale policy changes, it can also constitute information aimed at aid agencies. Relating to the widely accepted approach of 'adding value' and 'amplifying marginalised voices' as discussed by Krause (2014), it complements the statement by Scott et al. of 'adopting the role of a constructive watchdog for the aid sector' (2023: 4). In this case, journalists use examples of situations, ailments, or difficulties encountered during interviews with IDPs to inform NGOs and aid agencies, via their broadcasts, about the prevailing needs among communities, information of which NGOs might not yet be aware. As one journalist on *Faso Yafa* told me, regarding their target audiences,

> As for audiences, yes, there are listeners, but we also target NGOs and associations. Because, for example, if we go and do a report even if it's on someone in distress or who really needs helps, we tell them clearly that we cannot

[1] 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 also on this platform (see Castillo & Vosloo, 2017).

> give them help nor have we come to give them money. But we have come to relay their information, to share what they are going through on a daily basis, so that other NGOs, using their news, can help them better. That's who our audiences are. So, it's mainly the displaced, as we've already said. But in addition to the displaced, there are also donors, NGOs, and also local associations. Above all, we want to encourage aid at the level of local and community associations. (Personal interview, August 2022)

This case study also reinforces discussions in previous chapters about the relevance and importance of women journalists and their ability to reach populations, particularly in humanitarian reporting, bringing a perspective that men journalists may not be able to do. By gaining access to the 'private' space that women traditionally occupy, women journalists are able to provide a human perspective on news stories, allowing women interviewees to speak more openly and broaden the scope of broadcasts. As Orgeret (2016: 357) says, 'women tend to approach both conflict situations and the world in general from other angles, making space for other topics and other voices'. By approaching news gathering from a more human perspective, women journalists can help empower other women and their communities, raising topics of particular concern to them and giving them the opportunity to raise their visibility in community life and that of their community throughout society (Orgeret, 2016).

Reporting on the extremes of this context affects the journalists themselves. This raises a criticism of humanitarian journalism in that it questions any objectivity journalists can aspire to if the emotional effect on them of the story they are covering is significant, especially if they are personally too close to the topic or region (Glück, 2016; Kotisova, 2017). The psychological affect on Western journalists of covering conflict has been widely analysed, particularly the tension between being a journalist and a 'human being' (Andén-Papadopoulos & Pantti, 2013; Deuze, 2005; Kotisova, 2019; Richards & Rees, 2011; Schudson, 2003; Wahl-Jorgensen, 2020). There are fewer discussions regarding local journalists from the same areas as the events they are covering, experiencing the same trauma as those they are reporting on. This is important, as the emotions and the vicarious trauma they experience may also be first-hand trauma.[2] Questions

[2] In contrast to trauma which is experienced first-hand or directly, vicarious trauma is triggered through first-hand accounts or narratives of a given event. It can trigger a change in how the affected person views the world and their core beliefs about themselves and other people.

are, therefore, raised as to whether gaining a voice and *providing* a voice and ensuring it is heard (which might seem altruistic by the radio studio but is actually serving a purpose for them) can have a negative psychological and emotional impact on journalists.

Al-Ghazzi (2021: 2) talks, in this case, about 'affective proximity', which he defines as 'what locals navigate to reconcile their emotional and embodied entanglement within events in their country and community and a journalism profession that has traditionally been conceived as predicated on distance'. This is particularly relevant here when reporting on sensitive topics, which can trigger trauma among survivors by reliving it, journalists who hear and report it, and the audience who listens to it.

This chapter discusses interviews with women journalists on *Faso Yafa* working at Studio Yafa. Two rounds of discussions and interviews were held. The first was in person in January 2022 at Studio Yafa in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso's capital. Group discussions with approximately 10 journalists and representatives from the Studio were held on the broad topic of trauma-sensitive communication and the difficulties of reporting traumatic events and getting survivors to express themselves without retraumatising them. Additional interviews were also held with Fondation Hirondelle's country representative in Burkina Faso, also based at Studio Yafa. A second round of interviews was held in August 2022. These were held online because the deteriorating security situation in the country prevented travel to Burkina Faso. The key journalists forming the humanitarian journalism team were interviewed, along with the studio's editor-in-chief and the country representative. In-depth questions were asked during semi-structured interviews about interviewing techniques, humanitarian journalism in comparison with traditional journalism, and the structure and idea behind *Studio Faso* and its target audiences. The interviews also asked the journalists about their concerns for the young women correspondents working in the intervention zones and experiences of working with them, how they deal with sensitive topics, and how they initiate conversations. It investigates whether the journalists and employers themselves are reconceptualising their profession and whether any psychological or emotional support is in place at Studio Yafa for all the journalists concerned. While it is important to consider journalists' trauma, action must also be taken to ensure that the seemingly empowering act of 'giving a voice', which we have discussed at length, can, in fact, be disempowering. It is only by doing this that empowerment becomes exactly that, rather than a 'convenience' for Western NGOs and a convenient way

to obtain information. The personal experiences of the journalists provided rich primary qualitative interview data.

An Empowering Structure?

'*Faso Yaf*a' is produced by Studio Yafa, Fondation Hirondelle's radio studio in Burkina Faso, whose 'journalistic approach is fact-based, and always focused on the interests of the public, which is essential for building trust with the target population often bombarded with biased communications from extremist groups and pro-government sources' (Fondation Hirondelle Concept Note). As stated above, *Faso Yafa* has its origins in a larger project run by Studio Yafa and funded by the UNHCR to raise awareness of COVID-19 among IDPs. The COVID-19 project included the production of daily news and messages on the pandemic, radio sketches, weekly entertainment with popular artists, Q&As with a guest radio doctor, and so on. As the numbers of displaced persons continued to grow, Studio Yafa, with further funding from the UNHCR, determined that:

> It was absolutely necessary to create something to address this population, which had lost all links with society because they had left their homes in a disaster and arrived in areas they did not necessarily know. The aim of this programme [*Faso Yafa*] was to respond to a need for information that these people had both about their situation and about the NGOs and local forces that are working on their behalf. (Fondation Hirondelle Concept Note)

With the backing of the then Minister for Communication, Studio Yafa determined that *Faso Yafa*'s objective would be to 'contribute to humanitarian assistance to save the lives and restore the dignity of affected communities—especially their most vulnerable members—in Burkina Faso as part of the triple nexus'.[3] By creating and disseminating practical information programmes, transmitting information relating to the return of IDPs or their permanent settlement in host areas, and implementing activities to reduce gender-based violence, *Faso Yafa* aimed to link humanitarian NGOs, state structures such as CONASUR, and UN agencies with affected communities. *Faso Yafo*, broadcast by a media development

[3] This policy term—the triple nexus—encountered in previous chapters, is used to outline stronger collaboration and coordination among the humanitarian, development, and peace sectors (Nguya & Siddiqui, 2020).

NGO, therefore, acts as an appropriate example to discuss the central and positive role of radio in promoting social cohesion, bringing together community groups and agencies, providing information to, and raising needs awareness of, listeners who represent a significant and growing section of the population. Broadcasting programmes on displaced persons talking about their life experiences is not a priority for commercial radios, as they do not attract mass audiences or advertising income essential for survival. This task, therefore, falls to public service or NGO broadcasters. The Studio Yafa country representative emphasised the scale of producing what he described as humanitarian broadcasts, going on location, and managing the programmes. Larger commercial radios, such as Savane FM,[4] would not be prepared to spend resources on production but are, however, prepared to re-broadcast ready-made NGO broadcasts. As Sambrook (2010, in Bunce et al., 2019) stated, 'humanitarian journalism is rarely profitable. It is very expensive to fund the time-consuming research necessary to explain the complex causes and contexts of humanitarian crises'.

Humanitarian journalism is, therefore, not a commercial endeavour but places the audience at the heart of production. In this case, it means listening attentively to the IDPs and to the host populations, 'in order to implement interventions based on the participation and inclusion of these two categories of actors' (Fondation Hirondelle Concept note). It means responding directly to questions raised by vulnerable populations and doing so in a format that ensures that the response has the widest reach. The topic of female genital mutilation (FGM), for example, was first introduced in an edutainment[5] sketch, then discussed with a former FGM *exciseuse* [traditional cutter] in a debate format, with advice from the guest doctor, thus catering for the needs of listeners in both style and content. The humanitarian journalism here ensures that broadcasts are targeted specifically at the IDPs, rather than for monetary ends, which may be the case with mainstream and commercial journalism. It aims to provide a

[4] Savane FM Live is the most listened to commercial radio in Burkina Faso. Started in 1999, Savane FM Live broadcasts 24 hours a day, 12 months of the year. Savane FM has now become a major media group with the creation of Savane TV Media group with three radio stations specialising in mass communication, cultural activities, especially information, and with an emphasis on national languages.

[5] Educational entertainment is the provision of information via media platforms designed to educate through entertainment. Often, these are in the form of soap operas with characters that listeners can identify with.

service, promote human welfare among vulnerable populations, and act as their advocate before aid agencies. Thus, the relationship with the listener differs strongly from that of mainstream journalism, and journalists require specific training in humanitarian journalism. The *Faso Yafa* team had already received significant C4D (communication for development) training as part of their degrees at the *Université libre de Burkina Faso* and subsequently at Studio Yafa as part of their in-house training, resulting in a different approach from mainstream journalism. Their audience is principally men and women IDPs; however, they acknowledge that, on the ground, the *Faso Yafa* broadcasts tend to prioritise issues of interest to women and children given that they are most vulnerable among this population. They also target host communities, as promoting social cohesion in fragmented societies is paramount. As stated, funders, NGOs, and local associations are also target audiences, and the needs of affected communities are flagged to them via broadcasts. The journalists distanced themselves from 'mainstream' journalism, highlighting their more emotional approach to sourcing information. As one women journalist said,

> We pay much more attention to the human being, to the person we are talking to, even in the way we formulate the questions. We are careful not to make them relive the trauma they experienced before. And even when we start, and we see that there is some discomfort. The person doesn't necessarily want to talk about certain things. We're not going to insist as we would, for example, for a journalism, or 'classic' programme, where we come to look for information or we're going to put all the means in place to get that information. Here, we pay much more attention to the person, to their feelings and to what they might be feeling. This doesn't mean that we reduce the richness of the information. (Personal interview, August 2022)

The Programmes

Faso Yafa comprises weekly programmes of 30 minutes each in five languages (French, Mooré, Fulfuldé, Gourmanché, and Dioula). There is an overarching structure with a dedicated running order and timing, with a presenter linking the following sections:

A *magazine* (2:30) during which the journalists and 'correspondents' produce on-the-ground reports that highlight the realities of IDPs' lives in a given situation or a topic of common interest both on and off IDP sites. This section gives the floor mainly to young IDP men and women,

civil society organisations, and experts to provide a solution to certain daily problems.

Momo and Nafou, a two-minute awareness-raising edutainment radio sketch show featuring a male character Momo and a female character Nafou. In conversation, they explain sensitive or taboo situations that IDPs face on a daily basis with humour and in simple words, for example, rape, health issues, planning, shelter, and so on.

Kibar'utile [Useful Information] (2:00) through which *Faso Yafa* advocates on behalf of IDPs by improving humanitarian actors' understanding of the needs of youth and women in particular. It also aims to convey the humanitarian needs of IDPs to humanitarian NGOs. NGO representatives working with IDPs talk about the services they provide.

Laafi Kibar' [Health News] (4:00), during which journalists together with a medical doctor and psychologist dissect topics that allow vulnerable people to become better informed and aware of medicine, latest research, sexuality, psychology, and so on.

Musique Live (5:00) invites artists to discuss their music and give live performances and a message of hope and encouragement to the IDPs. By using local artists, this section provides a connection between radio and listeners, helping the latter identify with the broadcasts. Prior to the escalation of the security crisis, local artists used to go to villages, organise concerts, and mobilise people, but this is no longer possible.

Bonne arrivée (5:00 - fortnightly), during which IDPs and host family members share, in informal settings, their daily challenges of living together but also what each party brings to the other. Upon arrival, most IDPs seek shelter from relatives or friends. However, as returning home is often not an option, their presence is increasingly perceived as a burden in their new environment as already scarce resources are made to stretch further (Jacobs et al., 2020).

Initiatives (5:00–fortnightly). This section highlights positive initiatives implemented by and for IDPs in their new environment. Examples of these are a woman restaurateur who trains young girls to cook to liberate them from sex work; a young choreographer who created shows in town to support his family; and a teacher who welcomed 90 students into his home. These aim to shed a positive light on the activities of IDPs, contributing to better social cohesion and mutual aid between communities.

Grand publique (30:00–monthly). This is an interactive programme on a specific theme aiming to provide realistic and adaptable advice, with the Studio's guest doctor answering IDPs' questions.

The weekly programmes cover specific topics, many of which originate from conversations with IDPs and from feedback from the 'focal points' or structured listening groups discussed below. Areas for discussions are therefore proposed that might not have been considered by the journalists: 'depending on the themes, they really open up. They really explain to us what they experience in their daily lives' (Personal interview, August 2022). By including audience suggestions, a two-way flow of communication between listeners and the studio is created, ensuring that relevant topics and associated advice are broadcast. Such attention to listener needs might not emerge on commercial radio. According to the *Faso Yafa* journalists, IDPs suggested various areas for discussion:

> Well, there are foot sores, for example, or how do I feed my new-born, and things like that. Stopping diseases that are really specific to displaced people. … or urinary infections. I had a lot of questions about that, about urinary infections. It came up again this year, we'd never really thought about that. (Personal interview, August 2022)

These weekly topics are broadcast within *Faso Yafa*'s overarching theme of 'added value' through the promotion of social cohesion, which, according to the IDPs, means living together in harmony, solidarity, mutual aid and the absence of conflict discrimination and stigmatisation (Yaranagore, 2021).

However, logistical hurdles mean that Studio Yafa is reliant, for good or bad, on their multiple radio partners located throughout the country to determine the times at which the broadcasts are aired,[6] to the extent that, as the country representative of Studio Yafa told me:

> We once had a children's story time section, but they were broadcast at 8 pm. We realised there was no point in having children's stories going out if the children had already gone to bed. We ended up having to get it brought forward to 5.30 pm and on Saturdays. (Personal interview, August 2022)

Studio Yafa uses multiple platforms to ensure that their broadcasts—*Faso Yafa* in this case—are heard and responded to by the target audience.

[6] As with all the studios run by Fondation Hirondelle, the studios do not broadcast directly to listeners but via satellite to local or commercial radios who then rebroadcast it to their own audiences at a time which suits their own schedule.

It buys airtime from the largest commercial radio stations, such as Savane FM, which already have a large reach, and from its 51 partner local radio stations through whom it reaches 90% of the country. While Studio Yafa remains niche and little known by the population generally, its *Faso Yafa* programmes for IDPs are widely listened to. However, as they are broadcast via local radios, it is possible that the IDP and host communities do not recognise Studio Yafa itself but instead attribute it to the local radio station they know. Broadcasting via community radio is beneficial because of their combined reach and because each is a ‘proximity’ radio meeting the needs of immediate populations. Ba (2019: 3) describes proximity radio as local operators, whose distribution area is:

> the village, the town, the region, a human group linked by the same ethnicity, religion or profession, [ensuring] pluralism, the expression of minority cultures and promote access to those excluded from communication. They also have a development objective in the broadest sense, whether in the economic, social (literacy, education, training, outreach) or cultural fields.

The broadcasts are also circulated on Facebook and on the mobile platform Viamo. Populations outside the affected areas are thus better able to understand the experiences of affected communities. As not all areas with IDP populations are covered by local radios, Studio Yafa provided solar radios and installed loudspeakers or sound systems in certain locations at IPD sites, allowing collective listening sessions to be organised. Many women take part in these community spaces, leading to the kind of empowering initiatives we discussed in Chap. 6. The journalists recalled one group where:

> Women who were part of a listening group in Ouahigouya decided to organise themselves, to set up an association and to put in place a network of women. When they listened to the recording, they had lots of ideas, and they decided to set up associations. They’ve succeeded in setting up many income-generating activities. This is such a good result for these women.

Once again, the empowering effect of such groups is evident. Many women participate in this collective work, promoting the ‘power *with*’ approach we have already encountered. Having listened to recordings of the radio broadcasts, they were prompted to set up income-generating

activities, contributing to alleviating some of their collective and individual pressures.

Empowering Recruitment

A range of actors is involved in the production of *Faso Yafa*, in addition to Studio Yafa and its partner radios. This is designed to be a participatory output rather than top-down and aims to empower IDPs, particularly women and young people. Studio Yafa has an active policy of employing women throughout its structure where possible to empower local women and boost employment and training among them. Indeed, they were proud to have recruited the only woman taxi driver in the country, whom we had the pleasure of getting to know during one of our field trips. As the country representative told me:

> If there are two identical profiles—a man and a woman—we will always take the woman. We have had this approach since the beginning of Studio Yafa in 2018. In addition, for this project, no, I do not think there was any more to it than that. However, three female journalists were recruited in October 2021 to start this project. (Personal interview, August 2022)

Was this also to tick funders' gender equality boxes or do women cover violence and conflict differently from men? Is the journalists' experience as a woman within the framework of these cultural and professional norms and practices beneficial to both their work and their interviewees and listeners? Do interviewees perceive women journalists as more approachable than men? While the women were recruited on merit, not just because of their gender, it was also recognised that they may be better placed than their male counterparts to gain sensitive information from IDPs. One woman *Faso Yafa* journalist commented:

> It's easier for us women to broach certain subjects, for example, sexuality or the intimacy of women. I remember there was a report with one woman, who explained her problems but in reality, she didn't explain the real problem. And it was only in the exchanges I had with her that she really explained. Her real problem was that her husband had abandoned her and that there was no longer any intimacy with him. (Personal interview, August 2022)

The editor-in-chief of Studio Yafa complemented this, saying that it was also easier for women journalists to contact people, as they confide better in women than men. 'Overall,' he said, 'I think we can say that they do better than men'. Without access to female sources, the lives of IDPs, the majority of whom are women in any case, would be represented through a male perspective, significantly skewing realities and providing a narrow interpretation of their many difficulties. Given that these journalists define their role as humanitarian journalists, it would appear even more important for women to work with these communities, ensuring that women are heard and that their opinions are listened to and acted upon. The journalists told me that they are able to find IDP women interviewees to chat to at healthcare or family planning clinics simply because they themselves are women and naturally have access to these sites.

> There are always people there who the women IDPs trust, who the whole group trusts. When you identify these people and you go to the group, it's easier to get access to the displaced people. And so, generally, we work out who, in the community, is most empowered to facilitate access to the displaced people and we talk to those people. We explain to them what we want. And then depending on their answers, depending on the exchanges, we start exchanges in private, they can tell us things and subjects can come out. And we see as we go along how the person answers us; is the person open to answering our questions or is the person somewhat defensive? (Personal interview, August 2022)

The women journalists gain trust through this access and by using a gentle approach. Multiple visits are often required to return to sensitive topics and obtain further information. Those interviewees then direct them to other people for other subjects.

However, the *Faso Yafa* women journalists, based in the Studio in the capital, do not work alone. Young women 'correspondents', or 'special envoys' as they were later renamed, were recruited throughout the affected areas. Whilst this recruitment campaign reinforced Studio Yafa's positive approach towards women employees, it was also a requirement of UNHCR funding, highlighting the influence of investors on practice. The donor's *Policy on Age, Gender and Diversity* emphasises the need for participatory methodologies to 'promote the role of women, men, girls, and boys of all ages and backgrounds as agents of change in their families and communities' (UNHCR, 2019: 6). As a condition of the funding, the UNHCR

requested that the proposal demonstrated the involvement of IDPs and young women IDPs. Rather than simply interviewing women IDPs for reports, which would comply with the requirements, Studio Yafa proposed the active involvement of these young women in data collection instead. The recruitment criteria were that the young women had to be between 18 and 35, be able to read and speak French and have the secondary school education of a 15-year-old. Having received training locally in Kaya and Ouahigouya in basic interviewing techniques and been given mobiles and recorders, the young women were tasked with collecting information from the affected areas on particular themes, for example, the military junta or the transitional government, and sending it to the team in the capital to be converted into that week's programme. They received financial support of 20,000 CFA per month (approximately £25), a considerable amount given that many families, having had to abandon their crops and cattle when they fled, only have one small meal a day to ensure that their children have two (Norwegian Refugee Council, 2022). They also received phone credit.

Like the women mentioned in Chap. 6 from the Radio Scout listening associations, the small income was an empowering opportunity for these young women. One, for example, managed to purchase some sheep and now has a small flock. One makes bags to sell, and another has paid for her own schooling. Another, who fled her home village having seen her parents massacred, is now working for a large international humanitarian NGO as a representative of vulnerable people in the field of education doing regular international Zoom meetings. These young women said (document provided during personal interview):

Correspondent 1: Before I was taken on as a correspondent on this project, I worked Saturday and Sunday shifts and earned 1500 or 2000 francs a day, which I saved to pay my school fees. With this project, with the money we were given, I paid for documents and part of my school fees.

Correspondent 2: Being a correspondent gives me money, which I also use to help my parents pay for millet and other family expenses. The project has given me tools such as a telephone and a Dictaphone that allow me to do the work that I am asked to do.

Correspondent 3: I used this money to pay my school fees, to pay for my bike and to give to my parents to take care of my brothers. I have a small business, so I sell soap and I am still selling it now.

Despite encountering numerous logistical difficulties with this part of the project, such as the challenge in contacting the correspondents because of poor connectivity or the availability of young women, the structural composition of this radio project has triggered life changes with empowerment effects rippling through communities. Procedures are being modified to optimise this resource, and additional recruits will be sought to increase the numbers to 65, some of whom will be men.

'*Focal points*', later renamed '*community relays*', or a form of listening group, were also created as part of the *Faso Yafa* structure. The aim of these focal points was primarily to collect listener feedback, using Kobo Collect,[7] to be sent to the in-studio journalists for them to respond accordingly. As a social and sociable medium (Yaméogo & Heywood, 2022), the broadcasting of radio programmes to collective listening groups also brought together communities splintered because of intracommunity tensions. Those organising each focal point were tasked with running the sessions, ensuring that the programmes were listened to via radio loudspeakers, and collecting and sending feedback. If the feedback was related to humanitarian responses, Studio Yafa directed this information to OCHA,[8] who, in turn, circulated it around the appropriate UN clusters to improve the humanitarian response. Bringing people together for collective radio listening in this way can promote social cohesions in areas where intra-community tension is extensive. The association mentioned above, called Zembaaba, meaning 'understanding' or 'cohesion', created by the focal points in Ouahigouya, materialised after an argument between two displaced women while listening to a broadcast at their site. The women suggested organising occasional gatherings to discuss activities that could

[7] KoBo Collect, part of the KoboToolbox, is a free open-source tool for mobile data collection https://www.kobotoolbox.org/

[8] The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) 'coordinates humanitarian response to expand the reach of humanitarian action, improve prioritization and reduce duplication [...]. OCHA's country and regional offices are responsible for delivering the core functions in the field.' (https://www.unocha.org/about-ocha/our-work). To achieve this, it is organised into thematic clusters for example housing, WASH, coordination, education, logistics, nutrition, health, food poverty.

further unite them, encourage people to accept one another, and facilitate living together in their new environment despite possibly coming from different backgrounds. Supported by the men, this association is now registered and has more than 200 members and has already carried out clean-up activities at farms and in Youba, in Ouahigouya. Activities such as these, where IDPs have been easily able to express their expectations and share their experiences, have created frameworks for exchange between vulnerable populations and experts in the field of social cohesion and living together. *Faso Yafa* is, therefore, a community endeavour seeking information from IDPs not only to give them a voice but also to communicate up-to-date information to NGOs and to provide information about NGOs to IDPs. Radio in this case is thus providing a two-way channel for communication.

However, reporting such stories, from such conditions, can take its toll and the impact of this must not be side-lined. The role of the journalist in conflict situations, whether covering bombs and explosions or the aftermath of those events, as in this case, can be traumatic. It can be at this point that the empowering and positive attitude of Studio Yafa towards women, be they journalists or interviewees, can be undone, retraumatising survivors or acting as stressors for both the journalists and the audience. Whilst it may indeed be the case that women might be better suited to deal with 'emotional' reports and that being sent to cover 'women-related' topics can give women journalists opportunities to gain employment, it also highlights the widespread discrimination they face; many stated that they are prevented from doing certain reports on more mainstream topics or presenting certain programmes simply because they were women. As a result, they may, therefore, be subject to trauma associated with reporting on emotional topics or to Al-Ghazzi's affective proximity (2021: 2) in which 'local media practitioners feel it as a circumstantial burden placed on them to narrate a news story, within which they are participants'. Many of the very sensitive topics, such as rape or other forms of GBV, FGM, child marriage, and child abuse, which are exacerbated within the IDP context, are not easily discussed in broadcasts because of their taboo nature. They are, therefore, often introduced within the framework of the sketch shows, as the characters are fictional and therefore distanced from reality. Nonetheless, information has to be gathered. Many women journalists throughout these projects have spoken of the difficulties they face when reporting on the IDPs' experiences:

> It's a job that is really demanding and very depressing. I can't say that in the 10 years I've been in the job that I haven't been depressed sometimes. Often, we've even called in a psychologist to help me because it's often not easy. The problem is, is that there's the whole social thing too. You come across people with social problems, and you really have sleepless nights. (Personal interview, August 2022)

Another told me, at length, that.

> Often, at the beginning at least, I used to suffer a lot. It's been difficult to maintain distance when you're reporting. There was a girl I interviewed once who had dropped out of school because the radicals massacred her teacher right in front of her very eyes. She ended up with no trust at all in school, and she wanted absolutely nothing more to do with it, and they moved to Ouagadougou. I must admit that this story made my heart beat faster for days on end. But at the moment, we're trying to keep our distance. In Kaya,[9] we saw displaced women who only had thin skirts; in the cold, they didn't have a toilet or a respectable place to wash, shower or relieve themselves in private. They didn't have their things; their dignity was violated. And when you see that on the ground, it really hits you hard. It's difficult to keep a distance from these women. I remember that day, we even contributed to give them something. (Personal Interview, August 2022)

Many of the *Faso Yafa* journalists demonstrate attempts to separate their role as journalists from that as persons. They would state to their interviewees that there were there to tell their story, pass on information about IDPs' needs and suffering, but not provide money or solutions themselves. By passing on that information, they act as the IDPs' voice, in turn, ensuring that it is heard and acted on by NGOs or those in authority. They felt that this was the purpose behind their role. However, as shown above, this was not always easy. Their very inability to act or respond compassionately by providing immediate direct help could be considered traumatic (Osofsky et al., 2005; Osmann et al., 2021). Women journalists from other media organisations agreed:

> Often, you'd say to yourself that if you had the means, rather than writing, you'd call on the authorities to intervene on behalf of the person. It would be better to help the person directly and relieve their suffering. So often

[9] Kaya is in the northwest of Burkina Faso, approximately 100 km from the capital. It has received a massive influx of IDPs since 2019 (Reliefweb, 2022b).

> these are situations that we experience on the ground and that makes an impression on us. (Woman journalist at Sidwaya, the French-language newspaper in Burkina Faso, personal interview, August 2022)

Although, in 2022, no formal trauma policies had been drawn up by Fondation Hirondelle for its studios, Studio Yafa, possibly by virtue of being a Western-run organisation, recognised the danger of journalism trauma and set up a psychological support service should the journalists ever need to talk because of the distressing and shocking stories they are confronted with. The country representative explained why this was necessary:

> When a woman tells you [the journalist] how she was raped and how each of the extremists would put a Kola[10] nut next to the woman he intended to rape that night, how some women would end up with 4 or 5 Kola nuts next to her…and how others tell you that they smeared themselves with excrement to avoid being raped. So, they [the journalists] hear this. You see their reports, it's very, very, very hard. We need to support them. (Personal interview, August 2022)

However, this journalism is being conducted in a context where mental health is insufficiently recognised and poorly supported. Socially constructed, mental illness is a taboo subject that attracts stigma in much of Africa (Amuyunzu-Nyamongo, 2013). According to the WHO, African states allocate an average of '$0.46 per capita to health care, well below the $2 per capita recommended for low-income countries' (Reliefweb, 2022a). This under-investment, compounded by multiple crises throughout Africa, has resulted in Africa recording the highest rate of deaths by suicide in the world (Barthet, 2022). Talking openly about trauma resulting from listening to others' trauma is therefore culturally challenging. The *Faso Yafa* women journalists have devised their own low-level strategies to deal with this. They spoke of simply talking with colleagues and sharing their stories. They discuss their feelings and try to encourage one another to try and keep on top of painful emotions. Thus far, they said that they had not resorted to the psychological services offered by the Studio but knowing that they are available is reassuring: 'For the moment,

[10] A Kola nut is approximately 5 cm in size, similar to a chestnut, and is the fruit of the Kola tree.

we haven't had to use this resource. But if the need arises, we wouldn't hesitate' (Personal interview, August 2022).[11]

It is not only the trauma affecting journalists that must be considered. The women and girls telling the stories to the journalists relive their experiences, potentially retraumatising themselves. It is at this point that the process of giving a voice to IDPs can be disempowering through repeating their trauma. However, given that information about the IDPs' needs must be heard either to condemn the perpetrators or to discuss coping strategies for other similar survivors or to pass on this information to NGOs and other aid associations, the women journalists recognise that particular techniques are needed when questioning individuals, using approaches that distinguish this (humanitarian) journalism from more mainstream journalism. In addition to choosing words carefully and using techniques learnt from their training, the journalists mentioned one occasion in particular in Kaya when they organised an in-person broadcast for the general public. The studio's guest medical doctor and a psychologist went to Kaya with the aim of discussing with IDPs the psychological problems and trauma they were experiencing, and this would form part of a question-and-answer style broadcast.

> The idea was that they could ask their questions whilst remaining anonymous, so as not to have to identify themselves, because often they don't necessarily talk to each other about what they've been through. This would allow them to be more frank, whilst also keeping their privacy and getting answers to their questions. We gave them pieces of paper so they could write down their questions. But afterwards, those who were comfortable speaking openly, could do so. But those who had questions but did not want us to know that these questions came from them, could write them down. And afterwards, the doctor and the psychologist would pick from these questions, answer them, and provide coping strategies.

Many of the young women who participated stated that this process provided them with significant emotional release. Whilst this one-off solution does not go as far as longer-term expressive writing or writing-for-healing techniques (Wilhelm & Crawford, 2018), many were able, for the first time, to talk about what had happened to them, even if in writing. Experiences that could not be expressed orally because of trauma and local

[11] For further details on local journalists and trauma in Burkina Faso, see Heywood et al. (2024).

social constraints were given a voice through writing. Survivors were also then able to hear other survivors' similar experiences in the broadcasts, reducing feelings of isolation and possible stigmatisation, and receive advice. Because their experiences were discussed on radio—a trusted information source—within their community, they felt their experiences were being acknowledged as real. The 'writers' were able to determine what they wrote, how, and maintained authorship over their lives in an empowering way. They were thus able to attain an element of control of their experiences and emotions while obtaining official and recognised support via radio.

Although the interviewed women did talk about their experiences and used the journalists to channel their information, this was not the case for men. This brings us back to the issue of hegemonic masculinities discussed in Chap. 4 and highlights the challenges associated with storing up potential social and psychological difficulties for the future through the reluctance to, or fear of, disclosing one's stressors (Barry & Mizrahi, 2005). The social constraints of their male role, which include suppressing emotions, are significant among male IDPs. Despite the negative consequences discussed in literature (for example Smyth et al., 2012) of not disclosing their experiences, the men were expected to 'remain strong, and not display any weaknesses' (editor-in-chief, personal interview, August 2022). According to the *Faso Yafa* journalists, male IDPs had greater difficulty talking about their problems, especially intimate ones. They may discuss their living and hygiene conditions; for example, one IDP mentioned having no toilets, but rarely do they discuss psychological problems. The social context is such that 'men must really stay dignified, strong, and not talk about their emotions' (editor-in-chief, personal interview 2022). This was the case whether the men were talking to men or women journalists. Despite it being a trusted medium with journalists who are also trusted, the opportunities radio presents to IDPs to talk about the extreme difficulties they are suffering can appear limited not only by the fear of revisiting trauma but also by gender. It may be empowering for women, but in this case, social norms act to disempower men, suggesting the on-going need to include an analysis of men and masculinities when discussing trauma and journalism (Orgeret, 2018: 350).

Conclusion

Examining the gendered recruitment policy of Studio Yafa, reinforced by donor demands, the chapter showed how radio as a structure can empower women through employment (power *to*) but also give them the autonomy to work for themselves and within a group (power *with*). Women journalists, because they are both women and journalists, were able to navigate social structures to gain access to and responses from (women) IDPs. As news-making may be difficult without appearing to be a threat to host communities, the journalists also worked with young women correspondents in the field to ensure that women IDPs' voices were listened to and acted upon. Drawing on previous discussions, the chapter emphasises the concept of *voice* and provides a good example of action leading to multiple levels of voice throughout communities being heard, leading to empowerment. However, the reporting in this case was humanitarian journalism, which differed significantly from mainstream or traditional journalism. The *Faso Yafa* journalists appeared to be reconceptualising their own profession, recognising the need for tailored training and support.

Attention is given to the individual, their suffering and experiences and relevant radio broadcasts with life-improving advice are aired in sensitive ways in response, and information is communicated to aid agencies and authorities. A clear principle of two-way flow of communication, based on listener requirements, which is essential for humanitarian journalism and advocacy, was created. Through their own listening, the women journalists contributed to the social construction of public problems by giving women (and men) IDPs a space for taboo topics to be discussed and acknowledged.

Trauma suffered by journalists and interviewees was also discussed, as was how it might be approached personally and in broadcasts. As one journalist said, it is not simply a case of getting a story: 'Often things are very, very, very heavy to bear for the journalist. On top of that, there's the family. If you want to deal with the family, there'll be children. There is also society that often wrongly judges journalists, especially women journalists. So especially women journalists are often viewed very badly by society' (Interview, September 2022).[12]

[12] My thanks go to Marie Fierens who conducted this interview as part of another joint project but has generously allowed me to use this quote here.

Despite the many positive structural qualities of *Faso Yafa*, there are nonetheless certain points that must be considered. Trauma experienced in the field is not limited to women, although they form the majority of the IDPs, and it is necessary to be mindful of men and masculinities in analyses. It is also important not to focus just on the priorities of the Global North and its worldview when analysing humanitarian reporting (Bunce et al., 2019). Nonetheless, *Faso Yafa* illustrates how well-run media are able to highlight the views and perspectives of affected communities with regard to the delivery of humanitarian assistance.

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CHAPTER 8

Conclusion

Women's empowerment in Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger is a widely discussed topic at multiple levels from international organisations to the grassroots community level. However, understandings of the very term, let alone the implementation of approaches to promote it, are far from universal. By providing awareness raising information on this topic, radio can trigger essential changes in critical consciousness among men and women alike, but only if the information reflects women in their own relational networks and in a manner that gives a voice to those at the heart of empowerment projects. This book has endeavoured to understand 'empowerment' in the context of these three countries and the way it is discussed, represented, and perceived. In doing so, it has emphasised the need to contextualise understandings rather than imposing Western perspectives, however well intentioned, and falling into the trap of ticking generic boxes laid down by donors or other organisations without adapting processes accordingly. Participatory or collaborative methods promote inclusivity and ensure that beneficiaries and affected communities can be in a position to influence the programmes targeted at them. Audiences can then make informed decisions or at least understand decisions that are being made on their behalf.

The various chapters have argued that radio, as the main source of information in the three countries, can play a significant role in promoting empowerment. To do this, not only must a clear understanding of the many perceptions of this concept be in place but the different levels of

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empowerment and their perceptions must also be taken into account at the design stage. Discussing research conducted over a five-year period from 2018, the chapters examined a range of topics, including women's political engagement, women and finances, women and life within marriage, inheritance, women's involvement in radio structures, and, finally, a contemporary investigation of radio, women IDPs, and trauma in Burkina Faso. They compared the perspectives of focus group participants, journalists, and experts in the countries with detailed content analyses of broadcasts produced by Studio Tamani in Mali, Studio Kalangou in Niger, and Studio Yafa in Burkina Faso.

Perceptions of Female Dis/Empowerment by Listeners, Radio, International Development Organisations, and Local Associations and Alignment of Radio's Empowerment Discourse with Those of Audiences, Organisations, Feminist Theories

From the focus group participants and the guests on the various programmes, it became apparent that, as expected, there was no single understanding of empowerment and that differences in opinions were gendered but also depended on age, education, and location. Women's perceptions differed based on what they felt was attainable, reflecting Kabeer's (1999) multi-layered decision-making approach and her consideration of first- and second-order strategic choices. Chapter 2 discussed the first or macro level of choice focusing on women's engagement in politics, but as women listeners found it difficult to identify with the concept of greater political participation although theoretically possible, there was a resultant lack of interest in this level of empowerment. Second- or micro-level decision-making was discussed in subsequent chapters and was understood as choices that do not affect the overall outcome of a woman's life (Kabeer, 1999). Respondents and radio guests readily identified with this level of empowerment, providing multiple examples of women involved in income-generating activities, for example. Women's empowerment was strongly associated with improvements in financial situations and thus with women achieving some independence from men but never from their children. The women did not perceive themselves to be individuals but

rather an indivisible part of larger family networks. Individual empowerment was, therefore, not considered.

Among men, while the actual concept of women's political empowerment, for example, was evident, its realisation encountered resistance, in reality and on radio, as the risk of male disempowerment in this male-dominated domain was felt strongly, triggering patriarchal anxieties. However, when discussed in relation to finances, for example, in Chaps. 3 and 6, this received the support of male respondents, as women's financial empowerment might result in lessening their own burden of providing for the family. There was no suggestion that men would help with domestic chores to support women's financial activities despite the general benefit the latter would bring. Such activities are not fully empowering, as they only serve to increase a woman's burden. This leads to passive empowerment. Although women may have the ability to (a) make these choices and (b) carry them out, they are, in fact, facing perceived best options rather than actual choices. Being able to make any choices in these contexts should empower women rather than disempower them. However, positive choices must be offered rather than last resort choices such as sex for food or other traumatic choices discussed in Chap. 7. As Khader (2018: 16) states, 'the reality is that being pushed to choose (among unacceptable alternatives), being expected to do (too much), and being expected to do more (than men) are modes of women's disempowerment'. Men's understandings of the term 'empowerment', therefore, often appeared convenient, as they drew on religious misinterpretations or rewordings of the concept of 'obedience' converting it to 'mutual respect' (Chap. 4), thus denying or impeding women's empowerment.

Perceptions of women's empowerment among those in urban and rural areas and perceptions on radio broadcasts of women's empowerment in rural or urban areas differed, with it being considered that urban women have greater options and that female subjugation was stronger in rural areas. Older respondents, aligning with radio guests, were adamant that empowerment was only achievable at the initiative of women themselves, as society will not adapt to them. According to them, working collectively and demonstrating power *with* (Rowlands, 1997) is the solution [l'Union est force]. We saw this repeatedly through the book in discussions on political engagement, finances, listening associations, and so on.

The Radio Studios' Support and Promotion of Women's Empowerment in Mali, Niger, and Burkina Faso

The three radio studios, Studio Tamani in Mali, Studio Kalangou in Niger, and Studio Yafa in Burkina Faso, being part of a Western media development organisation, are gender-aware, to some extent, and, therefore, not necessarily representative of all the respective media environments. Nonetheless, working with partner radios throughout the countries in which men dominate increases their challenges when implementing awareness raising programmes on women's empowerment. Whilst many of the topics covered in this book are also discussed by other commercial, community and state radio stations, some are prioritised by development radio, such as humanitarian broadcasts discussed in Chap. 7, making this choice of radio studio pertinent for analysis.

All three studios broadcast programmes with a specific emphasis on topics stereotypically considered to be associated with women, raising the visibility of women's empowerment simply by discussing the corresponding themes. However, this also risked 'silo-ing' these broadcasts with men, society's decision makers, dismissing them as being just for women and not of concern to them. Broadcasts differed between the studios, ranging in content (historical or contemporary information), format, and the number and type of guests. Women's voices were on radio (as presenters, guests, or interviewees); however, men gained more airtime, which meant that women, if they are not talking, are effectively silenced because of the lack of their visual presence, despite being physically present in the studio. The number of women in women-related programmes could also imply that the issues under discussion only concern women, suggesting that a greater male presence in such programmes would reinforce their essential role in empowering women and triggering social change. However, a male presence on radio could lead to even more male talk, reinforcing acceptance of the prevailing self-perpetuating male dominance (see Spender, 1985). Both Studio Kalangou and Studio Yafa also created spaces with women journalists. In the case of Studio Kalangou, this led to the production of weekly women's programmes called *Espace Femmes* made by women for women. Similarly, Studio Yafa has a positive discrimination employment policy, as seen in their humanitarian team of journalists. However, these women are involved in sensitive topics covering extreme suffering among IDPs because they are considered 'best suited' to having

the required emotion and empathy, revealing the organisation's unconscious gender bias.

Radio's Approach to Specific Issues Relating to Women's Empowerment and Audience Responses

One question threading through the chapters concerns the contextualisation of topics by the radio studios and whether a developmental or a cultural definition is adopted. Many topics were discussed because they responded to requirements in various SDGs; thus, there were broadcasts on finance, politics, inheritance, property, and violence, among others. However, to be empowering, listeners must be able to identify with the information and consider how to apply it in their own environment. The studios followed their mission statements by producing broadcasts within the country, for the country, and by those in the country. Whilst maintaining their own values, they endeavour to avoid a top-down approach, a criticism widely levelled at NGOs and development organisations and echoed by Manyozo (referred to in Obregón & Tufte, 2017: 643), who asserted that such an approach or strategy of 'development remains embedded in the Western neoliberal development paradigm, which has been criticized for its ethnocentric approach and negative social consequences'.

The topics discussed individually in the chapters exerted an influence on representations of both women and their empowerment, the approaches used, and provided opportunities for a range of discussions. For example, when discussing inheritance, there was a tendency to homogenise women, which contradicts the individualisation seen in development programmes but also meant that groups such as widows or orphans were side-lined. Similarly, when discussing marriage, hegemonic masculinities (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005) became an important part of the debate, thus positioning men within the discussion rather than excluding them. Topics such as domestic violence and FGM also triggered conscientization (Freire, 1998) or the process of developing a critical awareness of one's social reality through reflection and action, as they foregrounded women's role in this harmful and dangerous practice. Chapter 7 saw a humanitarian approach being taken when covering issues relating to the suffering and experiences of IDPs in Burkina Faso.

The themes also determined which voices were included in a broadcast and, in this regard, the radio programmes aligned with respondents'

wishes. The latter held clear opinions on women's voice on radio. Men agreed that women were, and also should be, the principal voices in discussions on taboo subjects related to sex and sexual health and on women-related themes generally. As a result, women gained a voice via radio to act as leaders in public debate in ways that are respected by both women and men. Both unmarried and married women respondents confirmed that women trust broadcasts using women's voices, as women are the best advocates for other women in regard to their victimisation and subjugation. The studios, therefore, face an enormous challenge in balancing taboo topics in their radio programmes, the voices that are spoken and heard, the styles used, and the very diverse audience to whom they broadcast and the range of cultures, religions, and political positions they represent.

Could Radio Do More to Promote Women's Empowerment or, Rather, Not Promote Social Norms That Disempower Women?

Whilst the studios contextualise their radio programmes, they are still broadcasters that target a general audience nationally, making it challenging to make radio attractive to all. Youth, among the respondents in Niger and Mali, were dismissive of radio, describing it as being for their parents and grandparents. Already not necessarily interested in the topic under discussion, youth will be less encouraged to learn more about that topic if the information is being aired via a medium they do not use. Radio must, therefore, work hard, through a variety of formats and content, to attract and maintain listeners' attention. Their broadcasts must be designed to be 'listenable' for their intended audience, and the format and content must, therefore, ensure that both the message giver (the radio studio) and the message receiver (the listener) have their information needs met. To facilitate this, audience feedback must be integrated into the design of broadcasts through the creation of a two-way flow of communication between listeners and the studio ensuring that relevant topics and associated advice or information are broadcast. This is already part of the structure for Studio Yafa's *Faso Yafa*, but not so much with Studio Kalangou or Studio Tamani (at the time of the research), although regular focus groups are organised with listeners, and feedback is gathered through social media platforms.

The book is limited in scope and length but should open out to many other fields of associated research. Whilst Fondation Hirondelle (2019) claims to provide 'independent, professional, relevant and accessible radio

news, information and dialogue programs', the complex relationship between journalism and the role of foreign development assistance in shaping African media systems must not be ignored (Paterson et al., 2018). The role of the radio studios is no different here as they too exert an influence on the media in Mali, Niger, and Burkina Faso, be it through the provision of equipment, buying airtime on which community radios may become dependent, training local journalists with its western assumptions, or the choice and presentation of content. Further investigation is necessary in this area. They, nonetheless, contribute significantly to the rich tapestry of intervention development strategies encountered in the Sahel and, in doing so, promote radio pluralism in the region. Comparative research would also be useful in bringing together the role of NGO radio with other radio providers in the media spheres of the three countries. Similarly, further research is now needed into radio and technology in this region (Heywood et al., 2023). Whilst in depth discussions of hybridity fall outside the scope of this book, it does acknowledge the emergence and relevance of radio and media convergence.

A further limitation is my own positionality as a researcher. While research identity is not a core purpose of the book, I must at least acknowledge the implicit and explicit biases brought to the research to say nothing of the power relations that were involved. Although I had the pleasure of meeting many of the respondents and journalists multiple times, I remained a white educated researcher from the Global North coming, like many others, to ask questions about their lives or question their journalist practices as if I 'knew best'. I didn't, and I also didn't claim to. We organised regular workshops with experts, journalists, and respondents from the countries over the course of the research projects to ask opinions, contributions, and advice on the direction of the research and on questions to be asked and how. The approach was collective, and findings were presented to the participants to ensure they were aware of the significant contribution they had made to the very information that was targeted at them.

Starting these initial conversations about radio's empowering role based on the content it broadcasts, the manner in which it broadcasts (formats and platforms), and the choice of who is involved in the broadcasting as producers, editors, presenters, or guests is important. At a time when journalists and media organisations in the three countries are reconceptualising their profession given the deteriorating security situation and socio-economic challenges, women's shifting roles in these male-dominated contexts cannot be understated. 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.

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