Community Radio Influence and Project Interventions During the Covid-19 Period

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Abstract

The Ministry of Health in Nairobi, Kenya confirmed the first case of COVID-19 (Corona Virus) on the 12th of March 2020 since the outbreak in China in December of 2019. COVID-19 was declared a pandemic and as a result negatively affected the lives of communities globally. Job loss, mental illness, uncertainty, deaths, domestic violence, denial, misconceptions of the existence of COVID-19 and depressed economies are some of the characteristic features of nations during the pandemic. The purpose of this study was to explore the role of community radio in community engagement in response to the COVID-19 pandemic among Voi and Marsabit marginalised communities in Kenya. The study objectives were to determine the influence of Sifa FM community radio station programmes on community development in Voi and Marsabit communities during the COVID-19 period; to establish the COVID-19 intervention projects conducted by Sifa FM community radio stations in Kenya that promote community development initiatives in Marsabit and Voi; to assess the challenges encountered when engaging in COVID-19 intervention projects by Sifa FM Voi and Marsabit community radio stations in Kenya to promote community engagement; and to identify risks and gaps encountered by Sifa FM Voi and Marsabit community radio stations during the COVID-19 period in Kenya. The study adopted the Empowerment Theory. 212 respondents participated in this study and consisted of four groups: The Sifa FM station manager, 11 community leaders and 100 community members in both Voi and Marsabit respectively. Purposive sampling was used to select community leaders and Sifa FM radio station manager, while snowball sampling was adopted to select community members residing in Voi and Marsabit communities. Mixed research design was adopted for this study. Data was collected using two interview guides and a semi-structured questionnaire. Data was collected between July and October 2021. Quantitative data was captured using SPSS version 20 software while qualitative data was analysed using thematic and content analysis.Findings revealed that Sifa FM community radio station programmes aired during the COVID-19 period contributed to increased levels of social and economic development in Voi and Marsabit communities. Social development was achieved to some extent through educating Sifa FM listeners on COVID-19 which influenced community health. Programmes about economic activities that were aired on Sifa FM provided insight that would impact the living standards of community members and economic development. Sifa FM contributed significantly to social-economic development of Voi and Marsabit communities during the COVID-19 period. Findings further revealed that Sifa FM contributed to several project interventions where the highest number of respondents supported public awareness on COVID-19 interventions as the priority. Results indicated that more can be done to increase the scope of outreach for project interventions from Sifa FM. There are challenges which were encountered by Voi and Marsa bit communities such as distribution of low-quality masks. Gaps were identified such as creating awareness of COVID-19. One risk associated with COVID-19 in Voi and Marsabit was job loss at a percentage of 84%

Keywords: Project Interventions, COVID-19, Economic Development, Social Development

Introduction

COVID-19 is a type of virus. There are a variety of viruses, and some are considered to cause disease (John Hopkins Medicine 2021). COVID-19 can be defined as an infectious disease that is caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus. Most individuals infected with COVID-19 experience mild to moderate respiratory illness and thus recover without requiring special treatment or hospitalization. Some individuals become very sick and require medical attention. Older persons with underlying conditions such as cardiovascular disease, diabetes, chronic respiratory disease or cancer are likely to develop serious COVID-19. The best way to prevent COVID-19 from spreading fast is by staying at least 1 metre apart from others, wearing a properly fitted mask, washing hands or using an alcohol-based sanitizer frequently and getting vaccinated (WHO 2022).

Studies have been conducted on COVID-19 content and understanding the disease through media (social, news and web) (Pandit & Kandpal 2020; Allington et al. 2020; Waters, James & Darby 2011; Neill et al. 2020). There are also studies on the interventions in response to the COVID-19 pandemic that have been conducted (ILO 2020; Jaguga&Kwobah 2020).

From the studies mentioned above, there are not many that have looked at the project interventions, influence, challenges, risks and gaps of community radio in response to the COVID-19 pandemic period, specifically from a Kenyan perspective. This could be the case as COVID-19 is still considered a new virus globally. This gap necessitates the need to conduct this study to establish the role community radio has played and continues to play in community engagement in response to COVID-19 in Kenya.

Data was collected from two Sifa FM community radio stations: Sifa FM Voi and Sifa FM Marasbit. Voi has a marketplace for agricultural and meat products from the fertile Taita Hills. Marsabit County, however, is prone to intense and catastrophic weather patterns which force its people to flee in search of food, water and pasture for their livestock hence the community consists of pastoralist.The two counties were select as they are different. One is an agricultural region, and the other is a nomadic region for comparison purposes. This study is important due to the impact that the COVID-19 pandemic has had on society. Research findings provide insights into the contributions of Sifa FM radio stations in the marginalized communities of Voi and Marsabit.

It is against this background that the study sought to examine the following research questions:
- What is the influence of Sifa FM radio programmes in the communities of Voi and Marsabit on community development among marginalised communities during the COVID-19 period?
- What are the COVID-19 project interventions conducted by Sifa FM in promoting community development in Voi and Marsabit?
- What are the challenges encountered by Sifa FM Marsabit and Voi community radio when engaging in COVID-19 Intervention projects to promote community engagement?
- What are the gaps and risks encountered when engaging in COVID-19 intervention projects by Sifa FM Voi and Marsabiot community radio stations?

Literature and Theoretical Review: The Empowerment Theory

Community engagement is viewed as citizen or public participation and is considered an umbrella concept that incorporates a variety of methods for bringing individuals together to address important concerns of society (Nabatchi & Amsler 2014, p. 63). In other definitions of community engagement, the strategic nature of community engagement is minimised, since its objective is to ensure that people outside of government are also included, and therefore can have an influence over (on) decision-making when it comes to policies and services. Community engagement is closely related to notions of empowerment (Morgan-Trimmer 2013).

The empowerment theory has been adopted as an alternative development approach to counter the shortcomings of mainstream development theories. Empowerment is viewed as a value orientation for working in the community and as a theoretical model for understanding process and redress efforts; to exert control and influence over decisions that affect an individual's organisational functioning and quality living standards of the community (Zimmennan & Warschausky 1998).

It is critical to differentiate values that create an empowerment approach to social change and empowerment theory. When considering the value orientation of empowerment, it is proposed that goals, aims and strategies are used for executing change. Empowerment theory does provide principles and a framework for organising our knowledge. In addition, Empowerment theory further facilitates advancing the construct beyond a passing trend and political manipulation. Empowerment theory suggests ways to measure the construct in various contexts; for instance, to study empowering processes and to distinguish empowerment from other constructs such as self-esteem, self-reliance, or position of control. Empowerment is a process where individuals examine the link between their goals, how to achieve their goals and the relationship between their efforts and life outcomes (Mechanic 1991).

Perkins and Zimmerman (1995) assert that empowerment is a process of empowering that helps individuals develop their skills to become independent problem solvers and decision makers. However, critics of empowerment theory argue that it is a perfect theory of alternative development due to its bottom–up approach but it is a challenge in its evaluation of acquired outcomes (Bandura 2012). This theory is applicable for this study as radio programmes and project interventions should aim at positively influencing communities in order to empower the under privilege.

Community Empowerment Strategies and COVID-19

COVID-19 has come with challenges such as increased poverty, inflation and retrenchment, among others. Strategies were needed by governments globally to assist in reducing the negative impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Thus, the practice of community empowerment features globally due to the negative impact the COVID-19 pandemic has had on livelihoods.

Community empowerment is viewed as the process that enables communities to increase control over their lives. *Communities* refer to groups of people that may or may not be physically connected but have common interests, concerns or identities. Communities could be categorised as local, national or international, with particular or varied interests. *Empowerment* is the process where people gain control of the factors and decisions that impact their living standards. In other words, people can increase their assets, attributes and

build their capacities to gain access, partners, networks and/or a voice, to obtain control. The term *enabling* in this context implies that people cannot 'be empowered' by other people; they can only empower themselves through acquiring different forms of power (Labonté & Laverack 2008). Thus, it is assumed that people are considered assets, and the role of the external agent is to assist the community in acquiring power.Community empowerment is viewed as more than the involvement, participation or engagement of communities; it is about community ownership and action aimed at social and political change. Community empowerment is viewed as a process of re-negotiating power to gain more control. Hence community empowerment recognises that if some people are going to be empowered, then others will be sharing their existing power and giving some power up (Baum 2008).

Globalisation adds another dimension to the process of community empowerment. In today's world, the local and global agenda are inextricably linked. Action on one cannot ignore the influence of or impact on the other. Community empowerment recognises and acts upon this inter-linkage and further ensures that power is shared not only at the local level but also at the global level.

According to Waisbord (2005), communication plays a significant role in ensuring community empowerment. Participatory approaches in communication that motivate discussion and debate result in increased knowledge, awareness and higher levels of critical thinking. Critical thinking allows communities to understand the interplay of forces operating on their lives and facilitates communities to make their own decisions.

The study conducted by Suparto and Agungnugraha (2021) on '*Community Empowerment Strategies in Alleviating Poverty during COVID-19 Pandemic 2021'* in Indonesia, provides insights that can be adopted by developing countries. Key results revealed that there were numerous community empowerment strategies that were adopted during the COVID-19 period. One strategy was adopting ground research-based policies. This strategy opened the opportunity for participation and collaboration of researchers to contribute to policy making. Another strategy was to strengthen the role of National teams or efforts in the acceleration of poverty reduction, especially in coordinating across sectors. This strategy was achieved through developing community economic productivity, which needs to be adjusted to the potential of the community and the resource environment. By developing community business production through the agricultural and fishery sector and managing the marketing sector, increased economic activity was achieved. Communities engaging in economic activities results in empowerment.

Influence Of Community Radio Station Programmes on Community Development During The COVID-19 Period.

Nirmala (2015) asserts that community radio has been used to empower communities in various ways. In the study on the role of community radio in empowering women, Nirmala (2015) observes that community radio: enhanced leadership qualities among women, increased women's general knowledge on topical issues in areas such as health and education and has allowed women to showcase their talents. Based in the northern region of Ghana, the study by Al-hassan, Andani and Abdul-Malik (2011) focused on the contribution made by Simli radio on the improvement of households. The study established that Simli radio contributed by creating awareness about community development issues such as agriculture, hygiene, sanitation and local governance.

Waters, James and Darby (2011) conducted a study entitled '*Health-promoting community radio in rural Bali: An impact evaluation Rural and remote health.*' This study was an evaluation of a community-based radio station in rural Bali, Indonesia. The study revealed that the locals thought the radio station made a significant impact in their community. Findings further revealed that the community radio station should build community trust, through creating a strong partnership with government and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) to improve health and social needs in the community. It was further observed that community perceptions changed due to the radio station adopting a broadcasting approach that held health programmes on-air which were supported by off-air activities within the community. From previous studies, it is evident that community radio does have a positive impact on empowering communities. A gap exists as none of the studies focused on Kenya regarding community engagement in response to COVID-19. This study aimed at filling this gap.

Promoting Community Development Initiatives Through COVID-19 Interventions in Community Radio in Kenya

Several COVID-19 interventions were implemented; some have been completed while others are ongoing. The Federation of Kenya Employers (FKE) interventions during COVID-19 assisted employees during the COVID-19 period. The COVID-19 pandemic posed a great risk to business operations on a global scale. When the first case of COVID-19 was confirmed in Kenya in March of 2020, the FKE issued an advisory urging members to comply with the directives issued by the Ministry of Health in Kenya to contain the spread and minimise the risk of infection, specifically in the workplace, to protect employees. The measures consisted of keeping the workplace and employees safe, providing safety gear, working from home and reducing travel, among others. In April 2020, the FKE conducted a survey on the '*Impact Assessment of COVID-19 on Businesses*'. Findings revealed that there was a need to cushion businesses and the economy from collapsing during the COVID-19 pandemic period. As there was a move towards reopening the Kenyan economy, the FKE prepared its members for the resumption of work through providing protocols and guidelines. The guidelines provided were meant to provide information on how to steer organisations to a safe return to work with the goal of reassuring customers, clients, and employees of the general safety of enterprise processes and products (ILO 2020).

A study on '*The impact of COVID-19 controls measures on social contacts and transmission in Kenyan informal settlements*,' was conducted. Results from a comparison matrix revealed the following: that masks were worn by one person in 92% of contact situations, 86% of respondents experienced partial loss of income due to COVID-19 and 74% indicated they were eating less or skipping meals due to having little money to purchase food. Thus, COVID-19 control measures had a significant negative impact on direct contact and transmission, but also caused considerable economic challenges and food insecurity. Finally, the negative and inequitable effects on economic and food security could imply that control measures were not sustainable (Quaife et al. 2020).

Interventions in the form of guidelines were proposed by the Ministry of Health in Kenya to protect employees while at work to ensure safety and productivity. Control measures put in place were not followed in slum areas, therefore transmission of COVID-19 took place due to lack of following the guidelines since social distancing was not possible due to residents living very close to each other and lack of money to buy basic items such as masks and food. A key limitation of studies addressed in this section is that none of the studies focused on the role of community radio in community engagement in response to COVID-19.

Challenges Encountered During the COVID 19 Period

According to World Health Organisation (2020) the COVID-19 pandemic unfortunately led to loss of human life globally and provided a similar challenge in public health, food systems as well as the work environment.

Relief web (2020) highlights ten challenges encountered in Kenya during the COVID-19 period which could be drawn from; education**,** food security and livelihoods**,** governance**,** health**,** multi-sectoral cash/social protection**,** nutrition**,** protection, Water, Sanitation & Hygiene (WASH), refugees, coordination, and common services.Challenges during the COVID 19 period were real and were centered mainly on accessing health care, food systems as well as the job market/livelihoods. A key limitation of studies conducted is drawn from the fact that studies conducted generalise on the challenges that COVID-19 19 presented.

Gaps Addressed During the COVID- 19 Period

A study on '*COVID-19 related knowledge, attitudes, practices and needs of households in informal settlements in Nairobi, Kenya'* was conducted. The purpose of the study was to investigate urban slums which are at high risk of COVID-19 transmission due to the lack of basic housing, water, and sanitation, and overcrowding. Findings revealed that 2,009 individuals (63% female) participated.

Knowledge of fever and cough as COVID-19 symptoms was high, however only 42% were listed as having difficulty in breathing. The majority of respondents (83%) were aware that anyone could be infected; on the other hand, younger respondents had lower perceived risk. High risk groups were correctly identified and consisted of the elderly who were 64%; while those with weak immune systems were 40%. Hand washing and using hand sanitizer were acknowledged to be known as prevention methods. However, 37% of the respondents were established not to have a personal water source while hand sanitizer was considered too expensive by 53% of the respondents and thus were viewed as barriers. Social distancing measures were viewed to be a challenge as 61% of the respondents were of the view that this would affect income.

A third of the respondents were concerned about losing income while only 26% were concerned about infecting others with the virus if themselves they were sick. It was further established that Government television advertisements and short message service (SMS) were deemed the most common sources of COVID-19 information and were viewed as trustworthy by 95% of the respondents however were less likely to reach the less educated households (Austrian, et al 2020).

A study on '*Mental health response to the COVID-19 pandemic in Kenya: a review'* was conducted. The study sought to describe the mental health response to the COVID-19 pandemic in Kenya, guided by the Mental Health Preparedness and Action Framework and to further offer context specific recommendations for improvement of the mental health response in Kenya. Findings revealed that the Covid-19 response in Kenya had no formal mental health response plan in place. Emphasis was placed on the urgent need for psychological first aid in the community. However, guidelines for the management of mental health conditions during the COVID-19 pandemic apparently had been prepared, however no implementation had taken place which posed as a major challenge because of a poorly resourced mental health system in the country. It was further established that there is no health surveillance system in place which limits the ability to design evidence-based interventions in the country (Jaguga&Kwobah , 2020). In relation to awareness

of COVID-19, Government television advertisements and short message service (SMS) were less likely to reach the less educated households.

Furthermore, COVID-19 response in Kenya has no formal mental health response plan in place. This presented a second gap which needs to be addressed. Government, NGOs, citizens and Corporate should come together and seek ways to address gaps which could facilitate efficiently addressing mental health concerns and creating awareness to all in both urban and rural areas. A gap exists as none of the studies focus on Kenya in line with community radio and community engagement in response to COVID-19.

Risks Encountered During the COVID 19 Period

A study on *'Media Consumption and Mental Health during COVID-19 Lockdown: A UK Cross-sectional Study Across England, Wales, Scotland, and Northern'* was conducted. This study sought to find out whether consumption of COVID-19 related information was associated with changes in mental health outcomes.

Findings revealed that there was a statistically significant correlation between COVID-19 media exposure with an increase in anxiety (GAD-7) and depression (PHQ-9). Media use was associated with anxiety and depression on the GAD-7 and PHQ-9 scales. Higher media exposure was related to higher anxiety and depression scores (Neill, Blair, Best, McGlinchey & Armour, 2020).The Centre for Disease Control (CDC) also reports getting infected with COVID 19 virus as a risk factor. Other examples of risk factors of getting the Covid-19 include   older age or having certain underlying medical conditions. CDC is conducting research to establish a better understanding as to why some individuals are more likely to develop severe COVID-19 illness. CDC prioritized this strategy in fighting Covid-19 (Centre for Discuses control, 2020).

The Covid-19 pandemic brought about economic and social disruption as millions of people globally were at risk of falling into extreme poverty. Globally, enterprises also faced a threat due to the COVID- 19 pandemic. It is alarming that almost half of the world's 3.3 billion workers were at a great risk of losing their livelihoods. Self- employed individuals were particularly vulnerable due to the fact that most of them lacked social protection and could not access quality health care and had no access to productive assets. Lock downs affected businesses globally meaning productivity was not at its peak. When there is no income there is no money to buy food for citizens and their families or less food is available which is less nutritious. Furthermore, border closures, trade restrictions and confinement measures hindered farmers from accessing local and international markets, as well as buying inputs and selling their produce. Agricultural workers were also prevented from harvesting crops, consequently disrupting domestic and international food supply chains. This resulted in reducing access to healthy, safe and diverse diets (World Health Organisation, 2020).

Several risks were observed during the COVID 19 period. Media exposure on COVID-19 can be linked with anxiety and depression. Another risk factor is being infected with COVID- 19 virus. Other risks are poverty, hindering the flow of food chains and falling or closure of enterprises. Mitigation measures are necessary.A gap exists as risks highlighted are centred on Europe. Generalisation of the risks which have been considered form a global perspective and limits focus on risks encountered by marginalized communities in response to COVID-19 particularly in Kenya.

Methodology

Research Design and Sample Size

This study adopted a mixed method design. A survey and key informant interviews were adopted. The survey consisted of closed and open-ended questions. Several studies on health interventions tend to make use of mixed methods (O'Cathain, Murphy & Nicholl 2007). The target population consisted of the programme managers of Sifa FM radio stations in Voi and Marsabit, listeners and community leaders. Purposive sampling was used to select 7 key informants from Marsabit and 4 key informants from Voi, who consisted of community leaders and one radio station manager. A total of 11 Key informants were interviewed. Snowball sampling was further used to select 100 Sifa FM radio listeners from both Voi and Marsabit respectively, for a total of 200 participants.

Data Analysis and Presentation

This study made use of thematic and content analysis, in order to analyse the qualitative data. Inductive coding and constant comparison were used to identify categories from the interviews and incorporated both extreme and negative cases in the sample to avoid forcing data into categories (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Moreover, many media related studies use content analysis. For instance, Pandit and Kandapal (2020) did content analysis of programmes broadcasted through the British Broadcasting Corperation (BBC) radio and All India radio and further used a survey to validate the content of the radio programmes. Content analysis is a 'technique for making inferences by objectively and systematically identifying specified characteristics of messages' (Holsti 1969, p. 14). The findings from qualitative data corroborated with that of quantitative data. Quantitative data was analysed using SPSS version 20.

Research Ethics

Consent was sought from all the participants: from the listeners of Sifa FM who filled in questionnaires to radio hosts and community leaders who engaged in interview sessions. A list of radio programmes aired by Sifa FM in Voi and Marsabit and their content was provided. A research permit was obtained from the National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI). All information obtained was handled with extreme caution, confidentiality and anonymity.

Limitations of the Study

The limitations of the study included government regulations on social distancing that hampered the movement of the researchers to the actual location of the radio stations. This resulted in some interviews being conducted virtually using Google Meet while others were conducted telephonically. Voi and Marsabit radio stations are in remote areas, which posed a challenge especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. Data was collected online through Google Meets, emails and phone calls to mitigate this limitation.

Results

Demographic Information

Respondents who participated in this research consisted of Voi (92%) and Marsabit (100%). The gender representation of respondents consisted of 63% males and 37% females in Voi and 64% males and 36% females in Marsabit.

Influence Of Sifa FM Radio Programmes on the Marginalised Communities of Voi and Marsabit During the COVID-19 Period

*Respondents listening to Sifa FM radio programmes*

The frequency table that follows (Table 1) illustrates the number of respondents that listen to Sifa FM and those that do not listen to Sifa FM.

Table 1: Respondents Who Listen to Sifa FM Radio in Voi and Marsabit.

Listen to Sifa FM	Frequency (Voi)	Percent (Voi %)	Frequency (Marsabit)	Percent (Marsabit %)
Yes	91	91	94	94
No	8	8	6	6
Total	99	99	100	100
Missing	1	1	0	0
Total	100	100	100	100

Source: Questionnaires

The information above is presented in the graph that follows (Graph 1) the table.
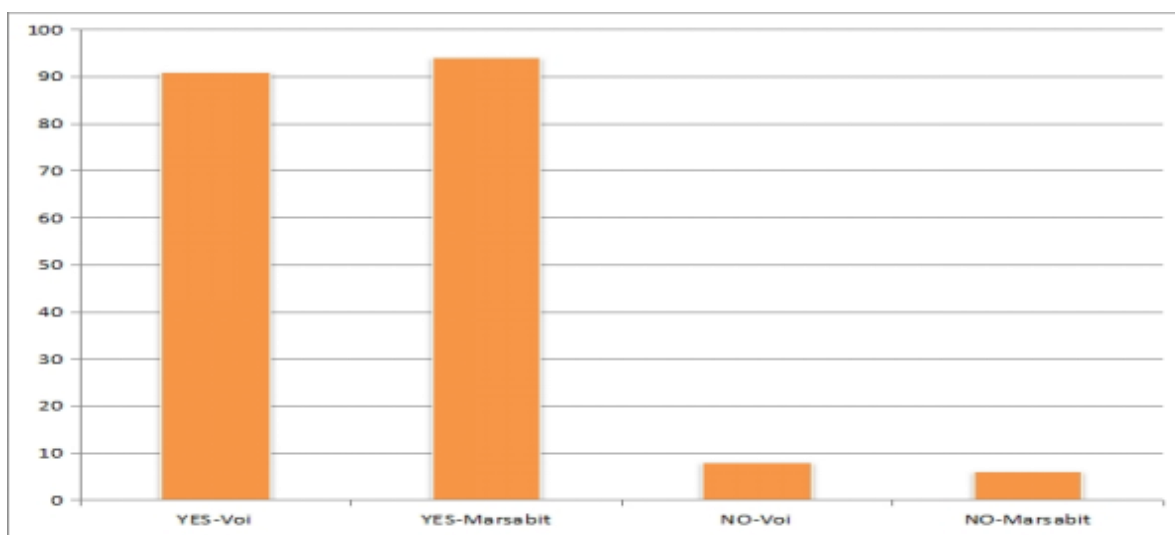
Source: Questionnaires

Graph 1: Respondents who listen to Sifa FM radio in Voi and Marsabit

Results reveal that the percentage of Voi respondents who listen (or not) to Sifa FM was 91% and 8% respectively. Respondents who listen (or not) to Sifa FM in Marsabit amounted to 94% and 6% respectively. This is an indication that most respondents listen to Sifa FM.

The frequency table (Table 2) below illustrates whether respondents listen to Sifa FM daily. Findings indicate that the percentage of Voi respondents who listen to Sifa FM daily was 41% and those that do not listen daily was 51%. The percentage of respondents who listen to Sifa FM daily in Marsabit was 51%

*Error! Reference source not found.*

while those who do not listen daily consisted of 39%. Marsabit is viewed to have more respondents listening to Sifa FM daily in comparison to Voi by 10%. The findings show the number of times respondents listen to Sifa FM broadcasts weekly. To follow is a table on the frequency and percentage for Voi and Marsabit on the number of times respondents listen to Sifa FM in a week. To follow the table, is a graph (Graph 2) illustrating the number of times respondents listen to Sifa FM weekly.

Table 2: The Number of Times Per Week Respondents from Voi and Marsabit Listen to Sifa FM.

Number of times respondents listen to Sifa FM	Frequency (Voi)	Percent (Voi %)	Frequency (Marsabit)	Percent (Marsabit %)
1	10	10	3	3
2	17	17	18	18
3	23	23	25	25
4	3	3	22	22
5	5	5	11	11
6	1	1	6	6
7	2	2	8	8
Total	61	61	93	93
Missing	39	39	7	7
Total	100	100	100	100

Source: Questionnaires

The graph that follows illustrates the number of days per week respondents from Voi and Marsabit listen to Sifa FM.
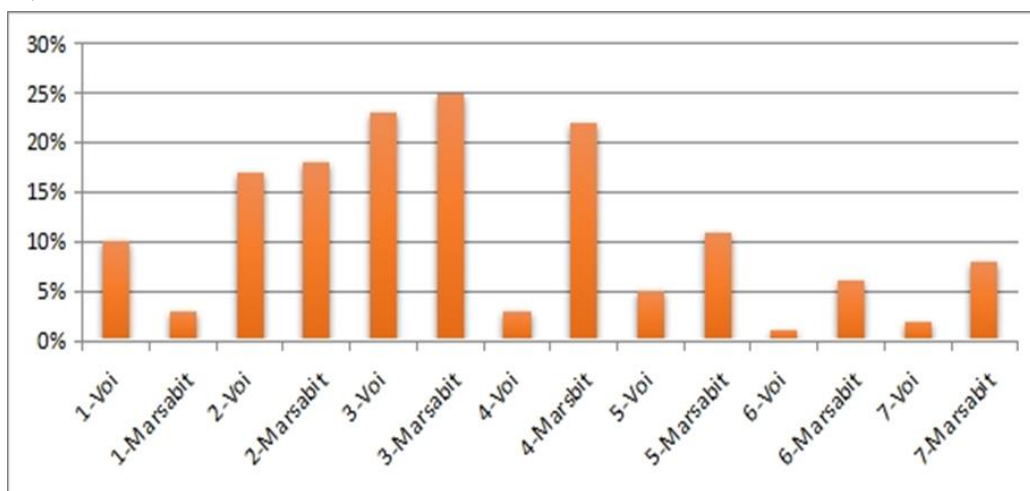
Graph 2: The number of days per week respondents from Voi and Marsabit listen to Sifa FM.

Source Questionnaire

From the graph above, the number of respondents that listen to Sifa FM with the highest percentage is 23 % from Voi and 25% from Marsabit. The lowest percentage is 1% in Voi and 3% in Marsabit. This means that the majority of respondents from both communities listen to SIFA FM radio programmes at least 3 days per week. Marsabit has the higher number of listeners on a weekly basis. This means that Sifa FM is listened to more in Marsabit than in Voi.

Programmes Aired by Sifa FM in Voi and Marsabit

The COVID-19 radio programmes aired by Sifa FM in Voi and Marsabit are numerous and aim to achieve social and economic development. Examples of radio programmes aired by Sifa FM in Marsabit that cover social development (health and education) are:

- Why do we need the COVID-19 vaccine and is it safe?
- Safety of teachers and students as schools are reopened.
- What are the possible side effects of the vaccine and how does it work?

Examples of radio programmes aired by Sifa FM in Voi that cover social development topics are:

- Youth and Covid-19
- Young girls and COVID-19

Sifa FM has also included a programme about the church and COVID-19, which is a social development topic. This caters for listeners' spirituality considering that COVID-19 has had negative outcomes and so spirituality can give hope to many listeners of Sifa FM. An example of a spiritual programme aired by Sifa FM in Marsabit is 'Spiritual nourishment on COVID-19 and effects that comes with it'. An example of a similar topic on Sifa FM in Voi is called 'Church and COVID-19'. Examples of Sifa FM programmes in Voi that consider economic activities and issues surrounding economic development during the COVID-19 period are:

- Livestock and COVID-19
- Innovation and COVID-19
- COVID-19 effects on transport
- Farming and COVID-19
- COVID-19 impact on the economy.

Only one programme was aired by Sifa FM in Marsabit on economic issues called 'COVID-19 which has some impact on the economy'. The above findings are supported by studies conducted by Nirmala (2015) and Waters, James and Darby (2011) who observed that community radio has been used in empowering the community in various ways. This ultimately leads to increased levels of social and economic development.

Project interventions

Sifa FM has played a significant role in executing project interventions to assist the communities in Voi and Marsabit during the COVID-19 period. The graph that follows (Graph 3) illustrates the awareness of communities on community intervention projects that Sifa FM has implemented in Voi and Marsabit.
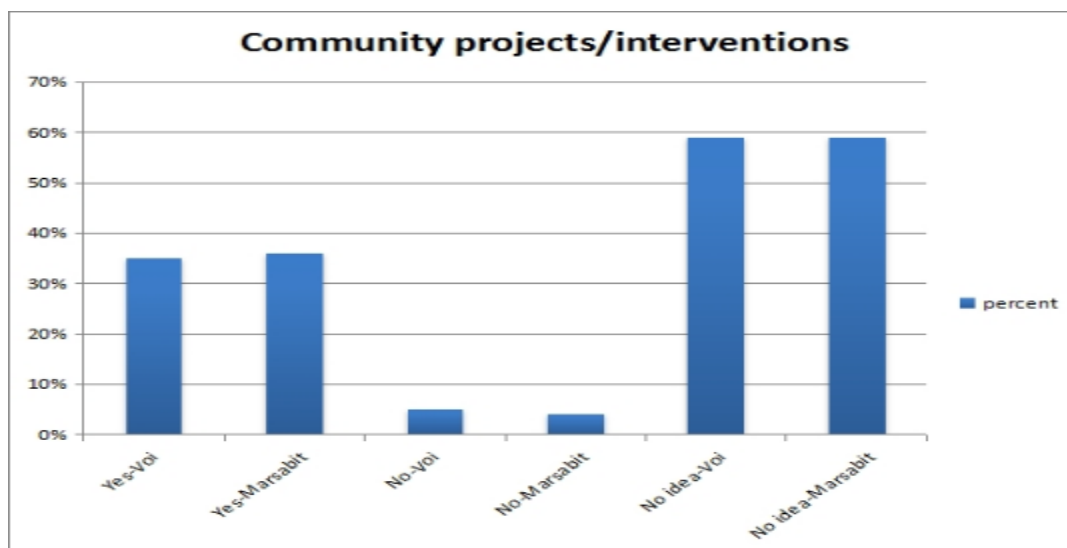
Graph 3: Respondent Awareness of Community Intervention Projects Implemented by Sifa FM in Voi and Marsabit

Source Questionnaire

The percentage of respondents who were aware of community intervention projects were 35% in Voi and 36% in Marsabit. The respondents who did not know (had no idea) about community intervention projects were the same in both communities at 59% respectively. The table (Table 3) that follows indicates project interventions initiated by Sifa FM in Voi.

Table 3: Interventions implemented by Sifa FM in Marsabit

Project Interventions for Marsabit	Number Of Respondents (Marsabit)	Project Interventions for Voi	Number Of Respondents (Voi)
Distributed plastic hand washing facilities to the community	9	They have been creating awareness.	9
Distribution of masks and sanitizer	12,13,15,16,17,18,2027,33,34,34,35,37, 45, 61,72,76.		25
Distribution of soap for washing hands and donations of face masks.	14	They are visiting people and gathering information on COVID-19	26
Distribution of plastic water tanks for hand washing and donation of face masks.	44,47	They have started youth employment project	32
Public campaign on COVID-19. Installation of water tanks.	91	teachings on prevention of COVID-19 and awareness on precautions and preventive measures of COVID-19.	74-88

They distributed plastic hand washing facilities to the community.	94	Gave food to the community. Did programs about COVID-19.	89
		Teaching about COVID-19, especially on how it spreads and how to protect ourselves from getting it.	90-91
		Awareness rising on COVID-19. The effects, preventive measures and how it spreads. Encouraging people to keep water outside to wash their hands frequently. Awareness on COVID-19 and free masks. Sifa FM taught the symptoms of the virus and how to keep away from it.	93,94,96 95 97,98,100 99

Source: Questionnaires

There are several project interventions that were implemented by Sifa FM in Voi. The table (Table 5) below provides the specific project interventions that respondents mentioned.

*Table 4: Project Interventions That Have Impacted the Communities of Voi*

Voi	Number of Respondents (Voi)	Marsabit	Number of Respondents (Marsabit)
Creating awareness has reduced the infection of COVID-19.	9	It has greatly helped in reducing the spread of COVID-19. People adhered to washing hands.	9,94
It has benefited the community because people have changed their attitudes about COVID-19.	25	It has reduced transmission of covid 19 virus since people wear face masks in public places and social gatherings.	13,47,70,72,76,88
People are aware about preventive measures**.**	26,32,65,70,72. 72-95.	The posters helped us know the steps to be taken to prevent COVID-19.	81
Yes, grandma always wears a mask. This means that the community is taking preventive measures quite well	96	Donations helped the community to get sanitizer and educate the public on the spread and prevention of COVID-19.	15,78
Rising awareness has made a lot of people keep safe from getting corona.	98	It saved money for the less privileged for buying masks and sanitizers.	12,37,16,17,18,20,2 2,45 31,32,35,61,64,89

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The community now knows more about the virus, the signs and symptoms and how to keep away from them.	98	It enlightened the community on the importance of observing cleanliness and educating the public.	33,34,65,75,91,
The people now know about COVID-19 while the masks provide safety from getting the virus.	99		
The community is now following the preventive measures by regularly washing hands with soap and wearing masks.	100		

Source: Questionnaires

Findings further revealed that respondents had varied views whether they would like to see Sifa FM engage in additional community project interventions within the communities of Voi and Marsabit (See Table 6 below followed by Graph 4).
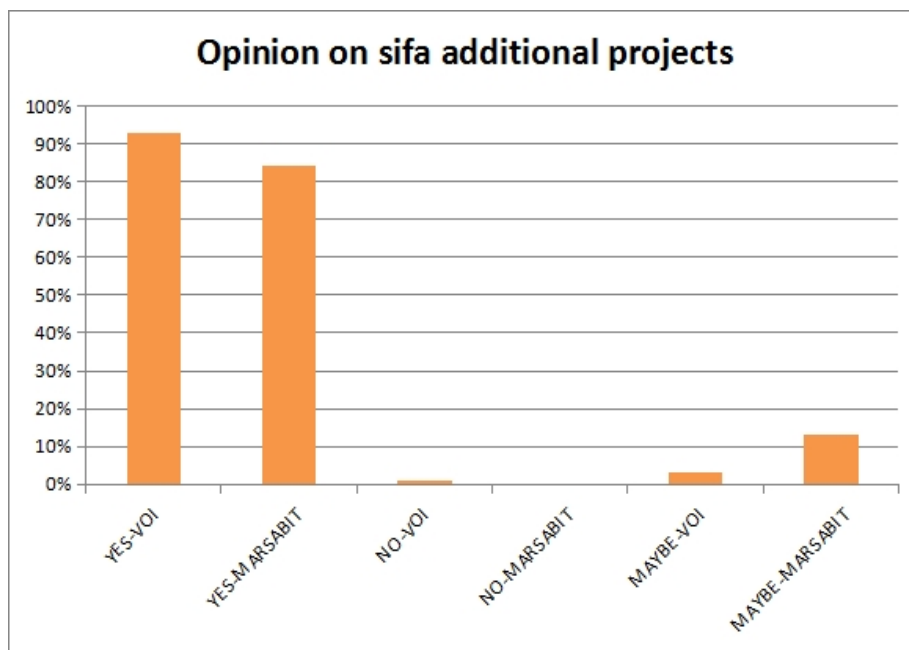
Graph 4: Opinions on Sifa FM's Additional Projects

Source: Questionnaires

The total number of respondents who want to see more project interventions from Sifa FM in Voi was 93% and in Marsabit was 84%. Very few respondents thought there should be no additional interventions or were indifferent about it. Some respondents from Voi and Marsabitprovided information concerning the community project interventions that Sifa FM engages in. The graph (Graph 5) that follows provides this information.
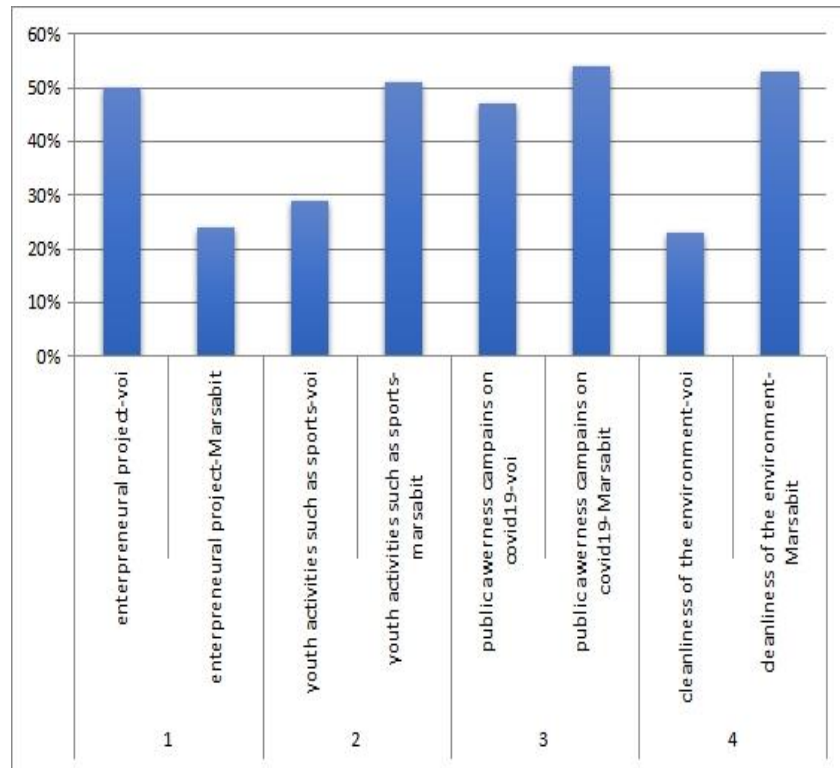
Graph 5: Respondents Responses on Interventions Sifa FM Engages In

Source: Questionnaires

The project interventions that Sifa FM engages in are:

- Entrepreneurial – 50% in Voi and 24% in Marsabit.
- Youth activities (such as sports)- 29% in Voi and 51% in Marsabit
- Public awareness campaigns for COVID-19- 47% in Voi and 54% in Marsabit
- Environment- 23% in Voi is 23% and 53% in Marsabit.

The highest number of respondents supported public awareness about COVID-19 in both Voi and Marsabit. This implies that the community views this intervention as important to educate and curb the spread of COVID-19. Other responses provided by key informants on additional project interventions that Sifa FM has engaged in follow:

Sifa is doing a great work by enlightening the community on the dangers of COVID-19 and importance of obeying health guidelines to contain the spread of the disease (KII 4 Marsabit).

Sifa FM plays a great role in educating the people on COVID-19, reaching out to people and educating people on health precautions, mobilising resources and creating toll-free numbers for helping those in need during COVID-19 (KII 4 Voi).

Challenges Encountered During the COVID- 19 Period

There are several challenges that communities in Marsabit and Voi faced during the COVID 19 period. Some of the challenges are highlighted in the graph that follows.
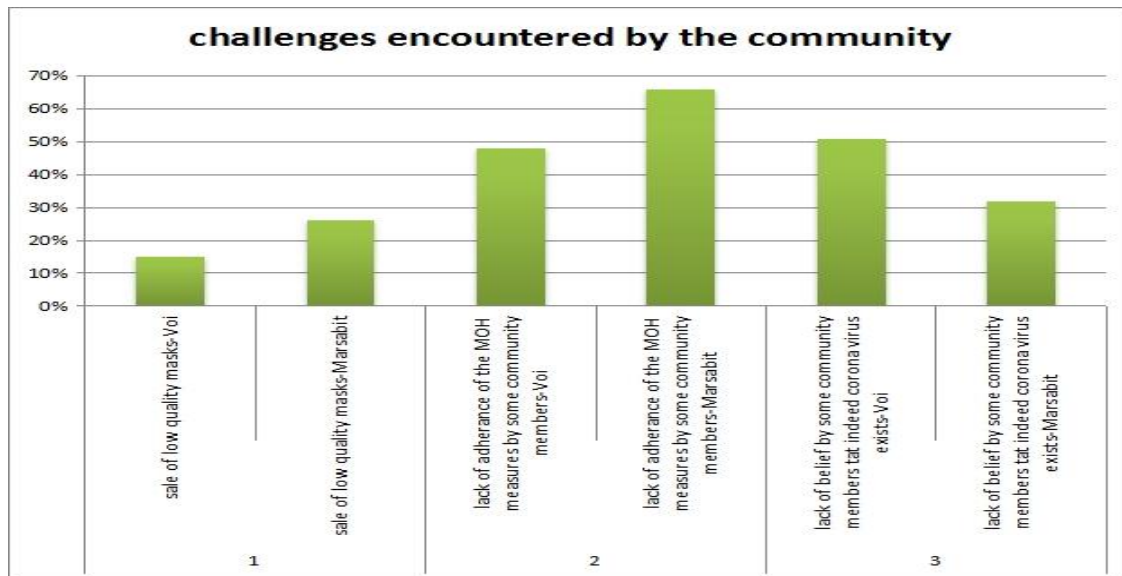
Graph 6: Challenges encountered during the COVID-19 pandemic for Voi and Marsabit

Source: Questionnaires

Findings revealed that 15% (Voi) and 26% (Marsabit) of the respondents were of the view that the sale of low-quality masks was one challenge. Lack of adherence to the Ministry of Health (MOH) measures by some community members amounted to 48% (Voi) and 66% (Marsabit). The lack of belief by some of the community members that indeed corona exists was 51% (Voi) and 32% (Marsabit). The greatest challenge encountered in Voi was lack of belief by some of the community members that corona virus exists (48%). In Marsabit lack of adherence to the MOH measures by some community members (66%) was deemed to be the greatest challenge. Other responses proved were.

> *'The challenges that come with COVID-19 is loss of jobs, poor services at office places, low sales by businesspeople, deaths, low living standards, economy shutdown, limits the number of people in worshiping places.' (KII 3 Marsabit)*
> *'The challenges encountered are economy shutdown, loss of lives, low sales, teenage pregnancy, family quarrels, job loss, depression, interference of school calendar, lock down and curfews which reste are several gaps that need to be addressed by Sifa FM radio stations in Marsabiot and Voi in order to have a greater impact on community development. Gaps identified were Creating adequate awareness of COVID-19, creating free COVID-19 testing kits, creating free affordable quarantine facilities, creating jobs and the distribution of free reusable quality cloth masks to the vulnerable members of the community. (KII 4 Voi)'*

The above quotes are supported by World Health Organisation (2020) whereby the COVID-19 pandemic has led to loss of lives providing similar challenges in public health, food systems as well as the work environment.

Project Intervention Gaps

The graph that follows illustrates percentage representation of activities suggested by respondents that Sifa FM can engage in with the help of other organizations during COVID 19 period to address gaps.
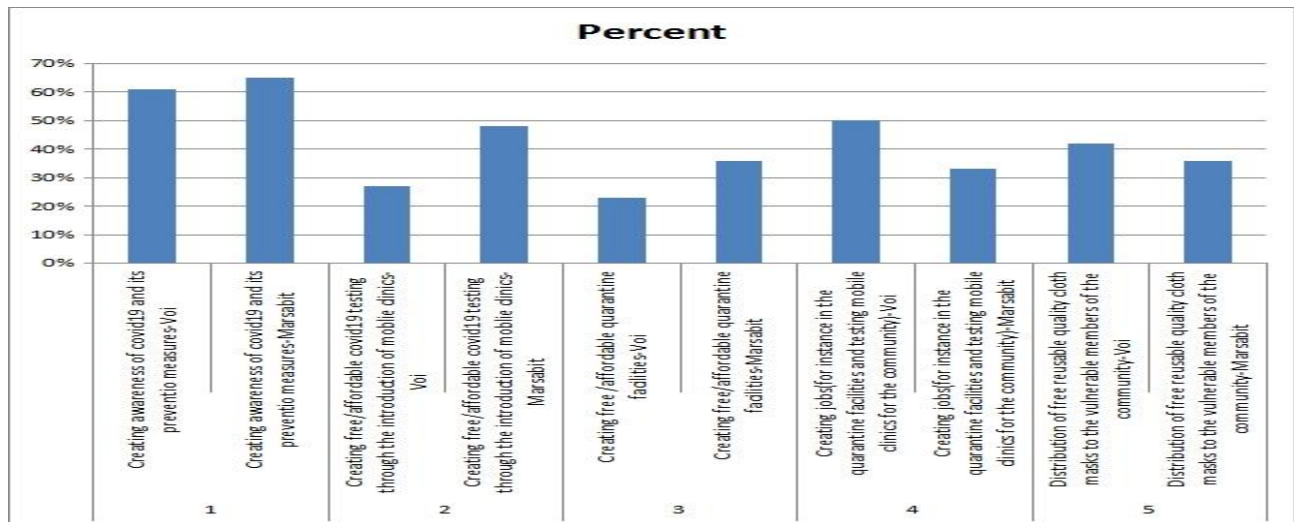
Graph 7: Activities Sifa FM Can Do with the Help of Other Organizations During This COVID-19 Period in Voi and Marsabit
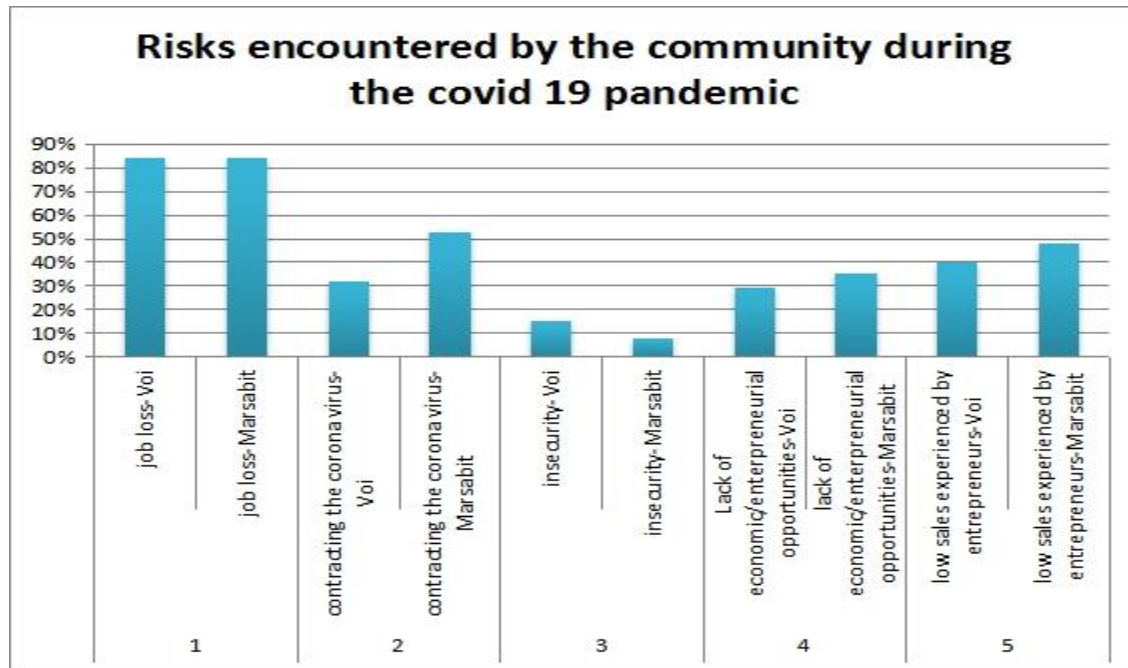
Source: Questionnaires

Findings indicate that respondents were of the view that creating awareness of COVID-19 was essential. The representation was 61% in Voi and 65% Marsabit while creating free COVID-19 testing kits was 27% in Voi and 48% in Marsabit. Creating free affordable quarantine facilities was 23% (Voi) and 36% (Marsabit). Creating jobs had a representation of 50% Voi and Marsabit 33%. The distribution of free reusable quality cloth masks to the vulnerable members of the community is 42% Voi and 36% Marsabit. The majority of the respondents suggested that Sifa FM should create more awareness of COVID-19 and its preventive measures as it had the highest percentage of 61% (Voi) and 65% (Marsabit) respectively. Respondents provided additional suggestions.

'Sifa Fm should come up with projects like organising seminars and workshop, training people on how to protect themselves from covid19, creating awareness, conducting surveys on how many are aware of dangers of covid19.' (KII 1 Marsabit)
'The community projects should be on cleanliness and hygiene which is the best way of combating covid-19 and availability of water, it should be available.' (KII 3 Voi)

Risks Associated With COVID-19

There are several risks that were identified that could be considered during the COVID-19 period. The graph that follows illustrates the risks that were encountered by Voi and Marsabit communities.

Graph 8: Risks Encountered by the Community During the Covid19 Pandemic in Voi and Marsabit

Source: Questionnaire

Findings revealed that one of the risks encountered by respondents was job loss at 84% in Voi and Marsabit. Another risk highlighted by respondents was contracting the virus with a percentage of 32 (Voi) and 53% (Marasbit). Insecurity was considered as another risk by respondents at 15% (Voi) and 9% (Marsabit) respectively. Lack of economic opportunities was another risk considered. 29% of respondents were of the view security was a risk in Voi and 35% in Marsabit. Low business sales experienced was deemed as another risk at 40% of respondents from Voi and 48% respectively in Marsabit.

For the graph above both Voi and Marsabit, the highest risk encountered was job loss at a percentage of 84% for both Voi and Marsabit communities respectively.
Other responses provided were.

'The risk identified are displacement of the people as people flee disease infected areas, loss of lives, improper burying of loved ones as a result of covid19 infections and dangers that comes with it.' (KII 2 Marsabit)
'Risks identified are loss of lives, human-wildlife conflict, and risk on food security because wildlife invades farmers farms during the night that is the curfew hours.' (KII 3 Voi)

Some of the findings reported in line with risks are supported by different scholars. COVID-19 has contributed to an increase in mental illness (Neill, Blair, Best, McGlinchey & Armour, 2020). The Centre for Disease Control (2020) highlights getting infected with COVID 19 virus is a risk factor. The risk of falling into extreme poverty, closesure of enterprises which would result to the risk of employees and employers losing their livelihoods. Self- employed individuals are particularly vulnerable. Lock downs affected businesses globally. Border closures, trade restrictions and confinement measures have hindered farmers from accessing local and international markets (World Health Organisation, 2020).

Conclusion

Most respondents in Voi (91%) and Masabit (94%) listen to Sifa FM; this indicates a large percentage of the respondents benefit from listening to the radio station. Sifa FM community radio programmes influenced the communities of Voi and Marsabit during the COVID-19 period. The aired programmes contributed to community development, particularly in social and economic development. Social development is taken from education conducted on COVID-19 which in turn impacts positively on community health. Economic development is based on the programmes aired by Sifa FM in line with COVID-19 and economic activities promoting economic development such as COVID-19 impact to the economy and Farming and COVID-19.

Sifa FM contributed to several project interventions. A high number of respondents supported public awareness of COVID-19 project intervention as the priority in Voi (47%) and Marsabit (54%); an indication that the majority of respondents have some knowledge of COVID-19 and could therefore help to reduce the transmission level of COVID-19 in those communities. However, respondents were of the view that entrepreneurial projects had a low intervention rate in Voi (50%) and Marsabit (24%). More can be done to increase the number of project interventions that Sifa FM can engage in, for instance environmental conservation, which could positively impact economic and social development in Voi and Marsabit. Challenges such as low quality masks lack of adherence to the Ministry of Health (MOH) measures risks such as job loss and gaps such as creating awareness of COVID19 and creating free COVID-19 testing kits needed to be addressed to assist in curbing the spread of COVID-19.

Acknowledgments

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