Determined **Resilient** **Empowered** **AIDS-Free** **Mentored** **Safe**

Listening to Kenyans to understand the obstacles to girls completing secondary school

A report prepared by Africa's Voices Foundation

for Trócaire and DREAMS IC project partners.

Findings and recommendations from the first of three interactive radio seasons, broadcast in April 2017, in Nairobi and Siaya, Kenya

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AFRICA'S VOICES

DREAMS
WORKING TOGETHER FOR
AN AIDS-FREE FUTURE
FOR GIRLS & WOMEN

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The goal of the DREAMS Innovation Challenge, is to reduce HIV infection among adolescent girls and young women (AGYW) in sub-Saharan Africa and support them to develop into "**D**etermined, **R**esilient, **E**mpowered, **A**IDS-Free, **M**entored, and **S**afe women".

Trócaire and partners, including Africa's Voices Foundation, are delivering a two-year DREAMS project to support AGYW in Kenya to complete their secondary school education -- which can dramatically reduce vulnerability to HIV infection. Our focus is on the rural area of Siaya County and in two urban informal settlements in Nairobi (Mukuru and Kangemi) which have high HIV prevalence rates. As part of this project, Africa's Voices is delivering three seasons of interactive radio shows designed to reach and engage the target population and gather data and insights to inform project activities.

This report refers to the first radio season, broadcast on radio stations in Nairobi and Siaya in April 2017. This season focused on gathering data to answer the following research question: ***"What are the socio-cultural and gender-based beliefs that prevent girls staying in or returning to secondary school?"***

A total of 2,835 people participated via SMS in four radio discussions (two per station) on school dropout and menstruation. Those who participated received SMS surveys to gather information on their demographics and practices. The majority of participants were aged between 15 and 29 years old and 69.9% were female. As well as Siaya and Nairobi, people participated from more than six other counties including Homa Bay and Kisumu. Key findings include:

1. **Audience responses point to five key agents in whether a girl completes secondary school: 'The individual (the girl herself), her home and family, her social group (peers, relationships), her community and socio-cultural factors, and the learning and school environment.** The DREAMS partners' activities currently target individual, community, and school levels. Our research provides a theoretical framework to underpin this approach as well as to expand it to include ***family and social group levels***. Men, more than women tend to think that the social group is responsible for girls dropping out from school, namely sexual relationships with men and negative influences from peers and boyfriends. This belief can lead to stigmatisation from men towards girls who dropped out of school, and also seems to show that men think that girls lack agency to make decisions about their lives but rather depend on the advice or influence of men. In urban areas, people tend to mention more than rural areas reasons more related to community. This result suggests that in rural areas, gender norms could probably be too ingrained for people to distance themselves and think about them or even to recognize them and their effects on their lives, as opposed to urban areas, where people are more willing to reflect on the effects of gender norms and early marriage on the girls' education.

2. **Most participants said that menstruation should not be a reason to avoid attending school, seeing it as a normal part of life as well as noting the importance of education. Men across all age groups, both in rural and urban areas were more likely to say that girls should not go to school during their**

period. However, clear ideas emerged about what conditions need to be in place for a girl to go to school during her period. One of the most prevalent barriers was access to sanitary pads. Other barriers included a lack of adequate support and health education from family and teachers, and a negative school environment. Participants from rural areas were more likely to point to lack of involvement from family and teachers as important for a girl to attend school during menstruation. This result suggests that this is an issue mainly in rural areas and justify the norm for girls missing the school during their period. They were also more likely to say that girls should not go to school to be exposed to their peers' judgement (such as stigma and boys making fun of them), and were less likely to state that periods are a normal part of life. These results suggest that interventions to promote girls to go to school during their periods should extend to their school community (teachers and male students) as well as their family in supporting girls and portraying periods as part of life

3. This first radio season of the DREAMS partnership suggest that the Africa's Voices interactive radio approach is a valuable tool for gathering beliefs on issues affecting school attendance by AGYW. 2835 people participated, and we conservatively estimate that at least ten times as many listened to the radio shows.

The purpose of the insights contained in this report is to inform the activities of Trócaire and the DREAMS project partners with the perspectives of AGYW and their communities, and to shape their initiatives accordingly. For example, our findings suggest that community forums run by Girl Child Network could focus on family-related issues linked to school dropout, as well as raising parents awareness about the support they need to give to their daughters. Further, our findings provide Bridge Centres with an understanding into what might keep AGYW away from school while menstruating -- and even fall behind and dropout -- helping to ensure support is informed and tailored. We will continue to work collaboratively with DREAMS project partners to explore how our insights can be applied to and enrich their work.

Listening to Kenyans to understand the obstacles to girls completing secondary school

Acronyms used in this brief include:	
AGYW	Adolescent Girls and Young Women
AVF	Africa's Voices Foundation
DREAMS	**D**etermined, **R**esilient, **E**mpowered, **A**IDS-Free, **M**entored, and **S**afe women
DREAMS IC	DREAMS Innovations Challenge
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GCN	Girl Child Network
HIV/AIDS	Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
OIDP	One-2-One Integrated Digital Platform
STI	Sexually Transmitted Infection
SMS	Short Messaging Service
SGBV	Sexual and Gender Based Violence

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Context: The link between HIV/AIDS and education

At the end of 2015, about 1.5 million Kenyans were living with HIV/AIDS, with the disease estimated to cause 29% of adult deaths. Women in Kenya are particularly vulnerable to HIV infection, with a national HIV prevalence rate of 7%, versus 4.7% for men (2015, HIV Estimate report). Especially at risk are adolescent girls and young women (15-24 years old), who account for 21% of new infections.[1]

One factor that can dramatically reduce young women's vulnerability to HIV infection is to keep girls in secondary school. For example, a 2015 study in Botswana found that for girls with ten years of education instead of just nine, the risk for HIV infection was reduced by nearly half.[2]

In Kenya, net enrolment rates significantly drop, especially for girls, from primary to secondary school. Consequences of not completing secondary school include low educational attainment and poor awareness of HIV/AIDS and related issues (health, personal hygiene, teenage pregnancy, contraception, sexuality, life skills, and rights). Girls who have dropped out of school, and do not return to complete their studies, are at increased risk of HIV infection and lifelong impoverishment.

1.2. The DREAMS Innovation Challenge

The goal of the DREAMS Innovation Challenge, is to reduce HIV infection among young women by 40%. Focusing on priority areas in 10 sub-Saharan African countries, the Challenge sought innovative solutions that support adolescent girls to develop into "**D**etermined, **R**esilient, **E**mpowered, **A**IDS-Free, **M**entored, and **S**afe women" (hence 'DREAMS').

Trócaire and other partners are the successful recipients of a DREAMS Innovation Challenge (IC) grant. Partners include Africa's Voices Foundation, The Girl Child Network, LVCT Health and Grow and Know. Through a two-year project, we aim to support over 5000 adolescent girls and young women (15-24 years old) to complete their secondary school education.

Our focus is on the rural area of Siaya County and in two urban informal settlements in Nairobi (Mukuru and Kangemi) which have high HIV prevalence rates for adults aged over 15 years (Nairobi 6.1%; Siaya 24.8% ('hyperendemic'), compared to a national average prevalence of 5.9%).[3]

Combined, our activities will provide informed and tailored services, information, and counselling to adolescent girls, as well as creating an enabling environment by working with community members.

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[1] Kenya HIV Estimate Report (2014)
[2] De Neve, Jan-Walter, et al., 'Length of secondary schooling and risk of HIV infection in Botswana: evidence from a natural experiment'. The Lancet Global Health, Vol. 3 , Issue 8 , e470 - e477.
[3] Kenya HIV County profiles (2016), National AIDS Control Council

1.3. Africa's Voices Foundation (AVF)

Africa's Voices has developed a unique way to listen intelligently to citizens of African countries. Our research generates nuanced evidence to inform, monitor and evaluate development and governance programmes. By sparking discussions in interactive media and digital channels – where participants can share their opinions via instant messaging, SMS and social media – we gather rich citizen-generated data.

We apply multidisciplinary analyses to the local language data, drawing upon our research at the University of Cambridge. These techniques produce meaningful and actionable insights into people's sentiments, opinions and beliefs. We're convinced that through thoughtful research design, citizen engagement, and tailored social data analytics, citizens' voices can be amplified to enhance the impact of development and governance actors in Africa –– ultimately boosting citizens' agency and wellbeing.

Africa's Voices role in the DREAMS project, led by Trócaire, is shaped by the following objectives:

> **1. To effectively reach and engage the target population** (adolescent girls and their communities)**, so as to gather digital data on their opinions, priorities and shared beliefs related to topics of interest** (education, HIV/AIDS).

> **2. To inform and inspire Trócaire and the DREAMS project partners through rich insights, helping to shape their initiatives to be more impactful**, and in the long-term, to recognise the importance of listening intelligently to citizens**.**

We will achieve these aims through interactive radio programmes, and analysis of digital data.

This brief provides the context, method, and initial findings of the first radio season of three. The broad schedule for the project is below:

Radio show season 1 (4 shows)	Radio show season 2 (4 shows)	Radio show season 3 (4 shows)	Final presentation of findings
April 2017	November 2017	April 2018	July 2018

2. METHOD

2.1. Research design

The research project was designed to generate valuable insights into the socio-cultural and gender-based barriers to girls transitioning to secondary school and/or completing their secondary school education, putting them at risk of HIV, and the extent to which community beliefs hinder or facilitate this.

With this foundation, AVF worked with the DREAMS IC project partners to develop the following key research questions:

1. **What are the socio-cultural and gender-based beliefs that prevent girls staying in or returning to secondary school?**

2. **What do communities believe makes adolescent girls vulnerable to HIV infection?**

This project is descriptive and content-focused with the primary aim of gathering insights into the collective beliefs and social norms of communities, and to inform partners about the socio-cultural barriers to education of girls and teenage mothers.

AVF will run three series consisting of four shows each, two in Nairobi and two in Siaya, that will engage audiences, promote discussion, and gather opinions via SMS on four key issues:

1. Gender-based barriers to education;

2. Womanhood and puberty;

3. Pregnancy; and

4. Relationships and HIV/AIDS.

This report refers to the first season of interactive radio shows which focused on understanding socio-cultural and gender-based beliefs that prevent girls staying or returning to secondary school. Specifically, we focused on the first two issues: gender-based barriers to education and womanhood and puberty. These are related to research question 1 only.

The next season scheduled for November this year will focus on pregnancy as a barrier to education, and the final season scheduled for April 2018 will focus on relationships and HIV/AIDS.

Focus group discussions

The scripts of the radio shows were designed by Africa's Voices and tested through focus group discussions (FGDs) in Kangemi, Nairobi county, with adolescent girls and young women (AGYW) and young men from the community. The objective of the FGDs was not to obtain participant opinions, but to test the understanding of the radio scripts in terms of the language used (to be accessible and jargon-free), making sure that the scenarios and the questions were not open to multiple interpretations. Due to logistical challenges, we were not able to test the script in Siaya, but intend to do so in the next season.

Radio scripts

The radio scripts described a fictional scenario, with a young girl facing challenges related to education, and posed a question related to her situation to the audience. The scenarios were developed based on a group discussion held with AGYW in Siaya after a community meeting. This was an informal discussion to try and understand what situations girls in their community face in relation to barriers education, puberty, pregnancy, relationships and HIV. Based on these scenarios, we then designed a radio question related to the scenario. The radio questions were designed with attention to socio-cognitive theories that consider how questions are processed and, in turn, answered by audiences. The questions were designed to be open-ended, widely comprehensible, and adjusted to the specific cultural context.

Radio show 1:

> Scenario of a young girl who completed her primary school education and performed well however, did not continue to secondary school, without giving her reason.
>
> *Radio question:* What do you think were the reasons she dropped out of school?

Radio show 2:

> Scenario of a young girl in secondary school who has been having trouble attending school when she is on her period due to strong pains and fear of soiling her uniform.
>
> *Radio question:* Do you think she should go to school during her period? Yes/No? Why?

2.2. Data collection: Radio & SMS

Radio broadcasts

AVF partnered with Ghetto Radio in Nairobi given its popularity in informal settlements and generally among young people. We specifically selected *'Goteana'*, the weekday show from 3 to 4 pm, hosted by DJ Bling and Bonoko, as it targets teenagers and young adults. We also partnered with Radio Ramogi based on its popularity in Siaya, and specifically, the mid-morning show hosted by Ruth, as it targets young people.

Prior to the radio show, AVF met with the radio presenters and introduced the project and gave a brief training on interactive radio shows which included: the objective of the show, what is expected, and strategies to increase engagement during the show.

During the broadcast, the radio script and question were read by the presenters several times during the show, and audiences were asked to send their responses via SMS to a toll-free shortcode. We invited guests from the other DREAMS IC implementing partners who were knowledgeable in the topic to introduce the topic during the show, and to address any

technical questions from the audience. Once we started receiving the messages, the presenters read out some of the responses, and the guest also responded to any arising issues from the questions that came in.

SMS surveys

Africa's Voices set up an SMS communications flow on EchoMobile, allowing for two-way communication with radio audiences via a free shortcode. Those who participated in the radio show received a socio-demographic survey (gender, age, location, occupation) through SMS. One day later, all participants received two additional survey questions related to the topic of the show.

SMS survey 1: Basic demographics asked to all participants sent after participation in radio show	SMS survey 2: Further demographics asked to those aged 21 and below sent 2 to 3 days after previous survey	SMS survey 3: Follow up questions asked to those aged 21 and below sent 2 to 3 days after previous survey

1. Are you male or female?
 	
2. What is your age?
 	
3. In what county do you live?
 	
4. In what village or neighbourhood do you live?
 	
5. Do you live in a rural or urban area? (Only asked to participants of Radio Ramogi)
 	
6. Have you dropped out of school?
 	
7. At what age did you drop out of school?
 	
8. Which class were you in before you dropped out?
	9. Are you a parent?
	
	10. Do you have brothers or sisters living with you in the same household? Please answer with yes or no.
	
	   a. [If 'yes' to Q9] How many? Please answer with a number.
	
	11. [If 'female' to Q1] Are you pregnant?
		12. How many hours did you spend yesterday doing housework, including caring for others, cleaning/ cooking? Please answer with a number.
		
		13. Are you currently a student?
		
		   a. [If 'yes' to Q12] What was the reason for the last time you missed school?
		
		   b. [If 'no' to Q12] What was the reason for dropping out of school?

2.3. Data analysis

AVF uses a mixed method approach combining qualitative thematic analysis and data science techniques. This allows us to gain insights from local language data on a scale otherwise difficult for qualitative methods.

The raw audience data first undergoes pre-processing, involving deidentification of phone numbers for data privacy followed by data cleaning to filter out spam messages and coding of short answers to SMS questions. Next, a thematic analysis is undertaken to organise the textual data (answers to radio questions) into themes and sub-themes. A coding frame of these themes is then developed and applied to label the data.

The resulting dataset consists of messages labelled with one or more themes, and is then analysed for associations with socio-demographic groups. The insights from this quantitative analysis are finally complemented with further qualitative interrogation and thick description of the data, with insights illustrated by a selection of text messages translated to English.

The insights that follow reflect the social reality of radio discussions and their participants. When the group of participants is heterogeneous and inclusive, it allows us to capture sets of beliefs that are prevalent in different groups. Contrary to surveys, this approach gathers opinions in their natural context and through a conversational mode, which is more aligned to the socio-cognitive processes that generate and shape these opinions.

2.4. Workshop with Trócaire and project partners

After an initial analysis of messages, Africa's Voices hosted a workshop with Trócaire and DREAMS project partners on 26th July 2017 to present and discuss early findings. Besides instilling a collaborative nature into the partnership, the objective was to identify avenues of particular interest to project partners and which insights could inform and enhance their project activities. Feedback included that the report should delve into how beliefs vary by demographics, particularly rural vs urban, as well as explore the role of sexual and reproductive health issues in secondary school outcomes for girls. The partners input helped to shape and tailor the themes, insights, and recommendations for the DREAMS project, and is reflected throughout the report below.

2.5. Limitations of the study

The participants are self-selected and are therefore non-representative of the population of listeners of the radio shows. Factors related to access to mobile phones, literacy, gender roles, and dynamics of participation influence participation[4].

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[4] Srinivasan, S., and Lopes, C. (2016). Africa?s Voices Versus Big Data? The Value of Citizen Engagement through Interactive Radio. In Oscar Hemer, Thomas Tufte (eds.), Voice & Matter: Communication, Development and the Cultural Return (pp.157-171), Publisher: NORDICOM.

3. RESULTS

3.1. Participation

A total of **2,613** people participated across the four radio shows, with 2,070 participants in Radio Ramogi (Siaya) and 543 participants in Ghetto Radio (Nairobi). 54 participants participated in both shows (school dropout and menstruation), 11 in radio Ghetto and 43 in radio Ramogi. Participation varied by topic and radio station as follows as:

Topic	Grand Total	Ramogi	Ghetto
Grand Total	2,667	2,113	554
Reasons for school dropout	1,637	1,411	226
Menstruation and school attendance	1,030	702	328

Figure 1: Number of participants by topic and by radio station

Age

The majority of participants were aged between 15 and 29 years old across both radio stations, as demonstrated in figure 2 below (response rate of 42.3%).
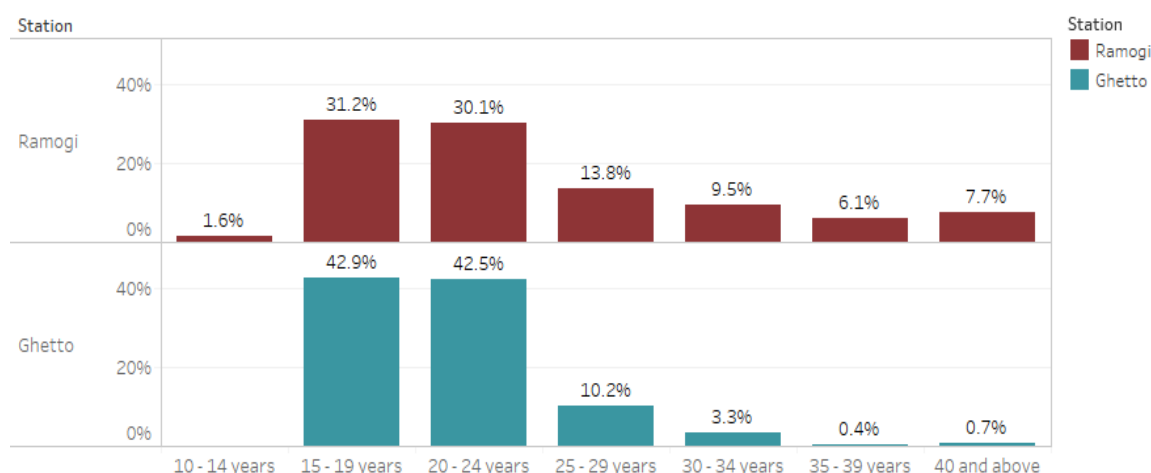

Figure 2: Age distribution of participants by radio station

Gender

In terms of gender, 69.9% of the participants were female (response rate of 35.0%), as illustrated in figure 3 below. These are encouraging results as radio discussions are usually dominated by men.[5]

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[5] Lopes, C., Mudhai, O.F. et al, Interactive media audiences in Africa, (2015). Interactive media audiences in Africa: A comparison of four constituencies in Kenya and Zambia. In Politics and Interactive Media Working Papers, The Centre of Governance and Human Rights, The University of Cambridge. See:
http://www.cghr.polis.cam.ac.uk/research-themes/dmvp/pima/pima-working-papers/pima-working-paper-4

Among listeners of Ghetto Radio, the first radio show on reasons for school dropout had 25.7% female participants, and the second show on menstruation and school attendance had 46.0% female participants.

Female participation was higher in Radio Ramogi with 85.2% female participants in the first show, and 97.8% female participation in the second show. We feel that this may be due to the radio show we chose on Radio Ramogi. This show may have a higher listenership among women as it is a mid-morning show, when more women than men are likely to be in the home, and also importantly it is hosted by a female presenter.
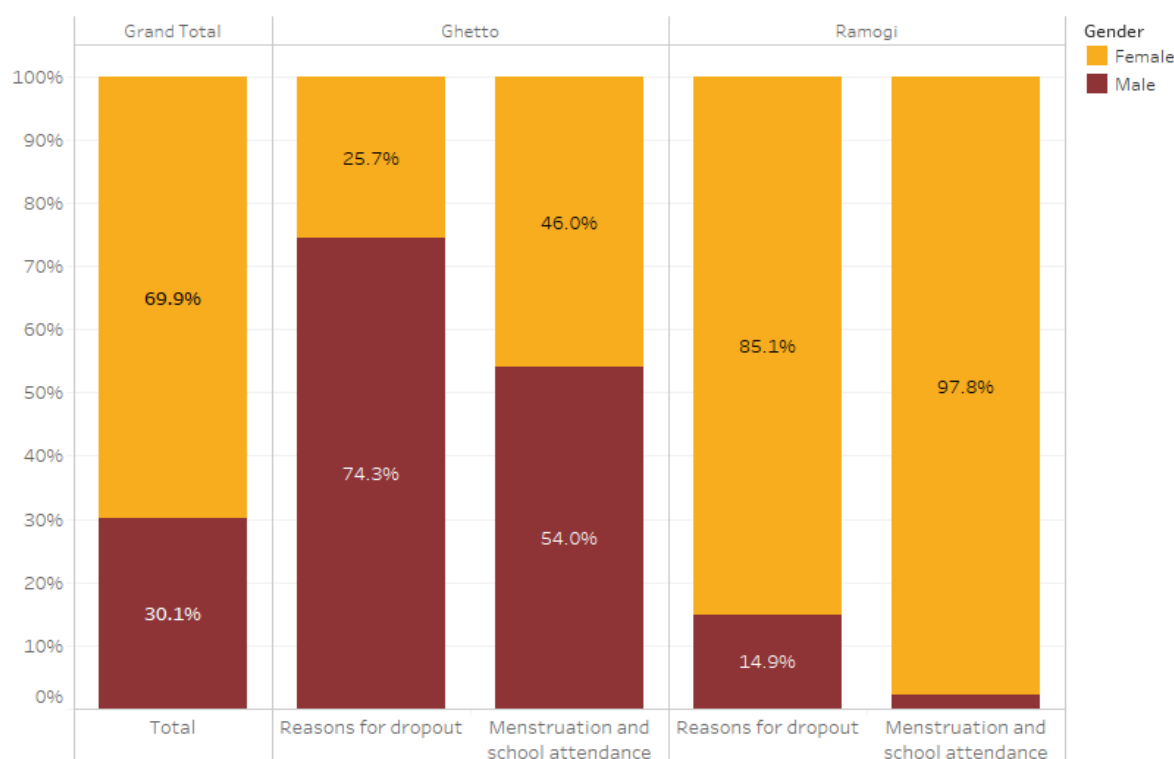

Figure 3: Gender distribution of participants by station and by topic

Gender by age

To focus in on the target population of AGYW we looked at gender distribution by age. Interestingly, this revealed that although female participation was greater than male participation overall, males who participated tend to be younger than females. There is an association between age and gender, with 61.4% of females in the age group 15-24 year-old compared to 76.7% of males [X-squared =4 .78, df = 1, p-value < 0.05].

However, among older age groups, from 25 years upwards, more females participated than males. This may be due to mothers and grown women feeling that this was a subject they could relate to and a discussion they could participate in. The distribution of age by gender (Fig. 4) is surprising as normally female participants in radio discussions tend to be younger than men[6]. It should be noted, however, that number of participants we had this information for was low, and therefore the sample may be biased.
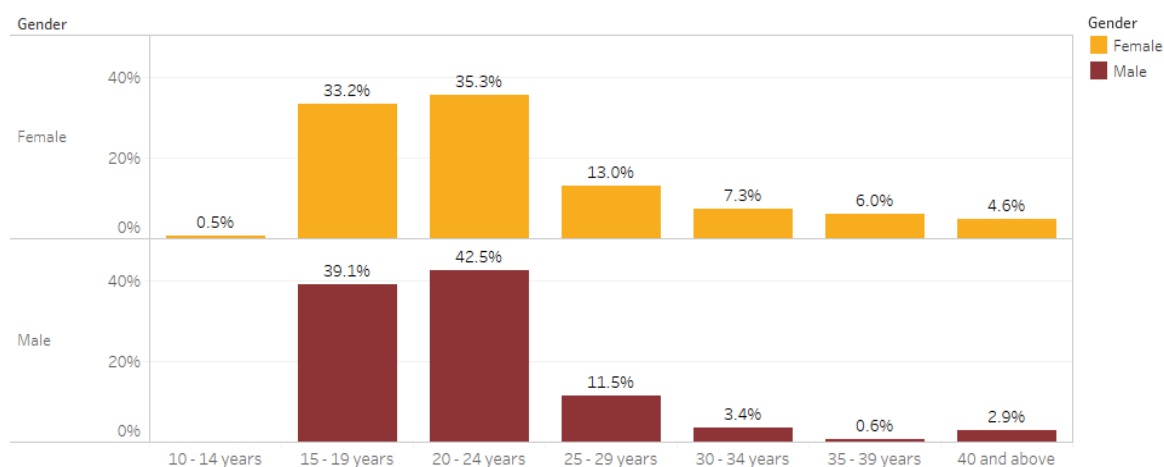
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[6] Ibid (page 9)

Figure 4: Gender distribution of participants by age

Seventy percent of participants on Radio Ramogi self-reported that they live in a rural area (response rate of 56.1%). This was based on the response to the question whether they were in an urban or rural area. This question was only asked to listeners of Radio Ramogi, as Ghetto Radio only broadcasts in Nairobi and its environs. Therefore all the participants from Ghetto Radio were assumed to be in an urban area.

Within the two target counties of this project we had a total of 454 participants: 266 in Siaya and 188 in Nairobi (response rate of 45.5%). The other counties reached by the radio shows were: Homa Bay (337), Kisumu (182), Migori (106), Kiambu (79), Machakos (38) and Kajiado (31). Figure 5 below highlights the proportion of participation of participants by county within each radio station.
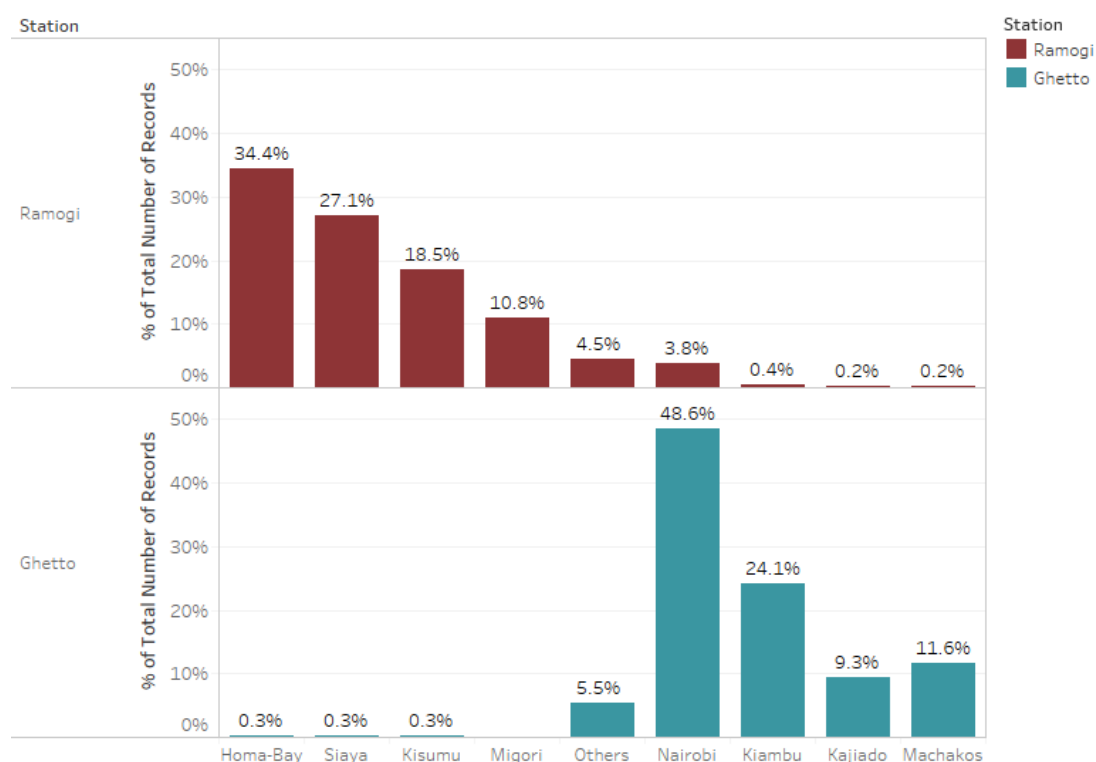

Figure 5: Participation by county

3.1.2. Characteristics of the target population

We asked questions among those assumed to be of school going age (21 years and below) to understand the characteristics of this target group better. When asked whether they live in the same house with a brother or sister, only 16 said they don't, while 166 said that they live with siblings (response rate of 8.6%[7]).

Among those who have siblings, there were slight differences in numbers of siblings among radio stations, with Ghetto participants reporting lower numbers of siblings and Ramogi participants reporting higher numbers of siblings, as figure 6 shows. However, response numbers for Ghetto are small, limiting the conclusions that can be drawn.
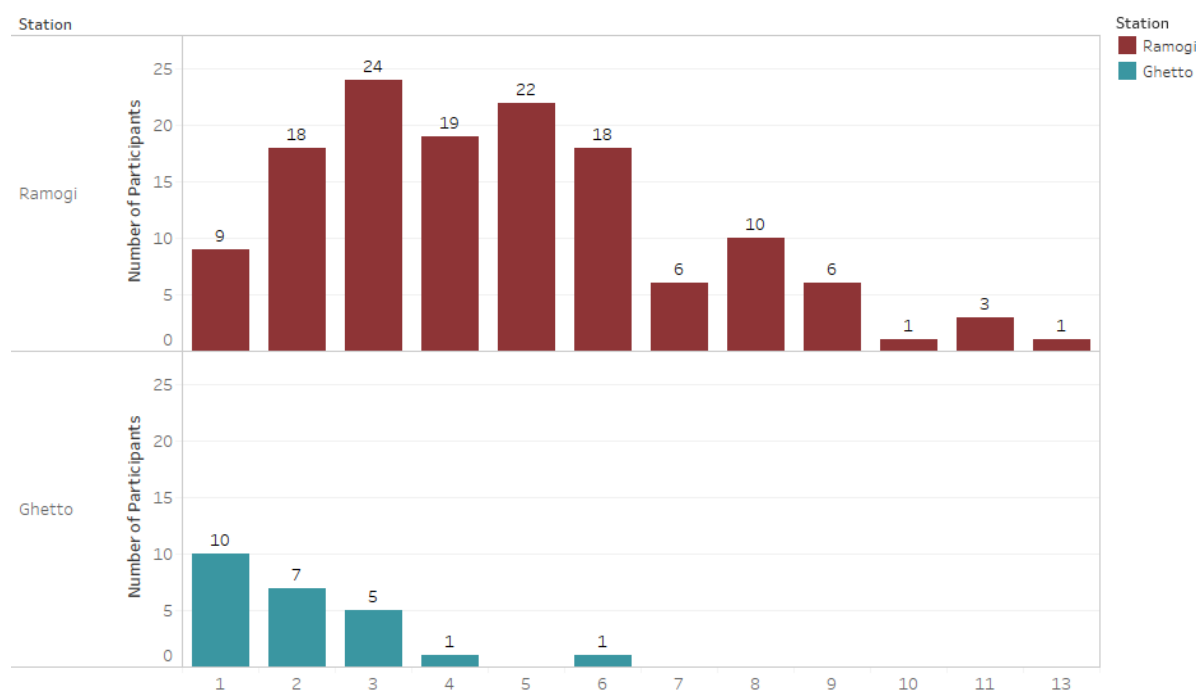

Figure 6: Number of siblings by radio station

When asked whether they had dropped out of school, 201 participants responded that they had (response rate of 33.0%[8]). Among the Ramogi participants who had dropped out, most of them did so either at Standard 8 (the last year of Primary School) or in Form 2 (response rate of 5.9%[9]).

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[7] This is a low response rate because it includes all participants, whereas the question was only asked to those aged 21 and below.
[8] Low response rate because it includes all participants, whereas the question was only asked to those aged 21 and below.
[9] Low response rate because it includes all participants, whereas the question was only asked to those aged 21 and below.
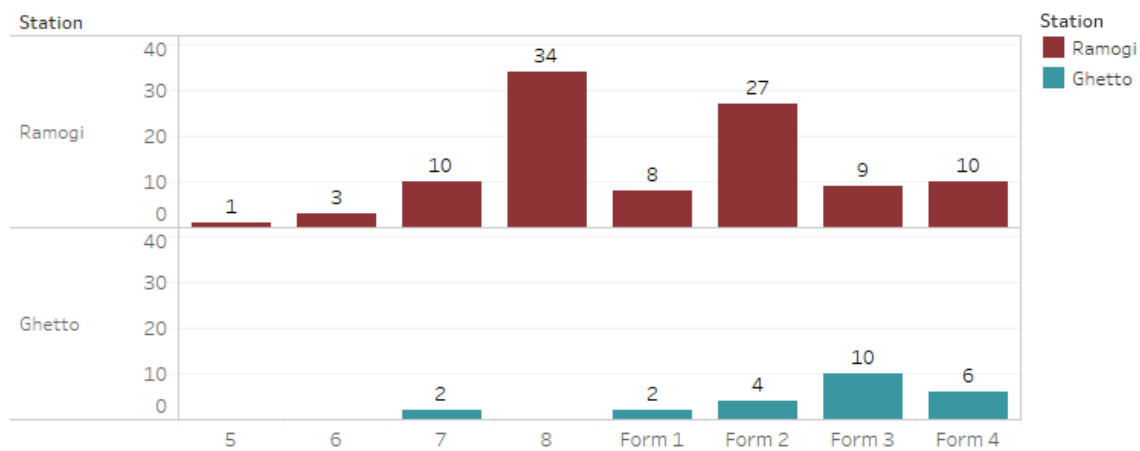
Figure 7: Level of education reached among those who dropped out

3.2. Gender-based barriers to education

The first radio show presented a scenario of a young girl who completed her primary school education and performed well but did not continue to secondary school, without giving her reason. The radio question that was asked to the audience was *"What do you think were the reasons she dropped out of school?"*. A total of 1637 people participated: 1411 in Ramogi and 226 in Ghetto. This section refers to the findings for this topic, looking at gender-based barriers to education.

3.2.1. Socio-cultural beliefs

From the SMS received, we developed a coding frame which had all the ideas contained in the messages grouped by basic themes. We used both an inductive approach and an a priori approach in developing the themes. In this sense, the themes came both from the ideas that were expressed in the data (inductive), as well as from existing literature on gendered barriers to education and our own local knowledge (a priori).

Using a network model for thematic analysis (Attride-Stirling, 2001), we sorted the basic themes into organising categories. The figure below is a thematic network that outlines the themes that developed from the data:
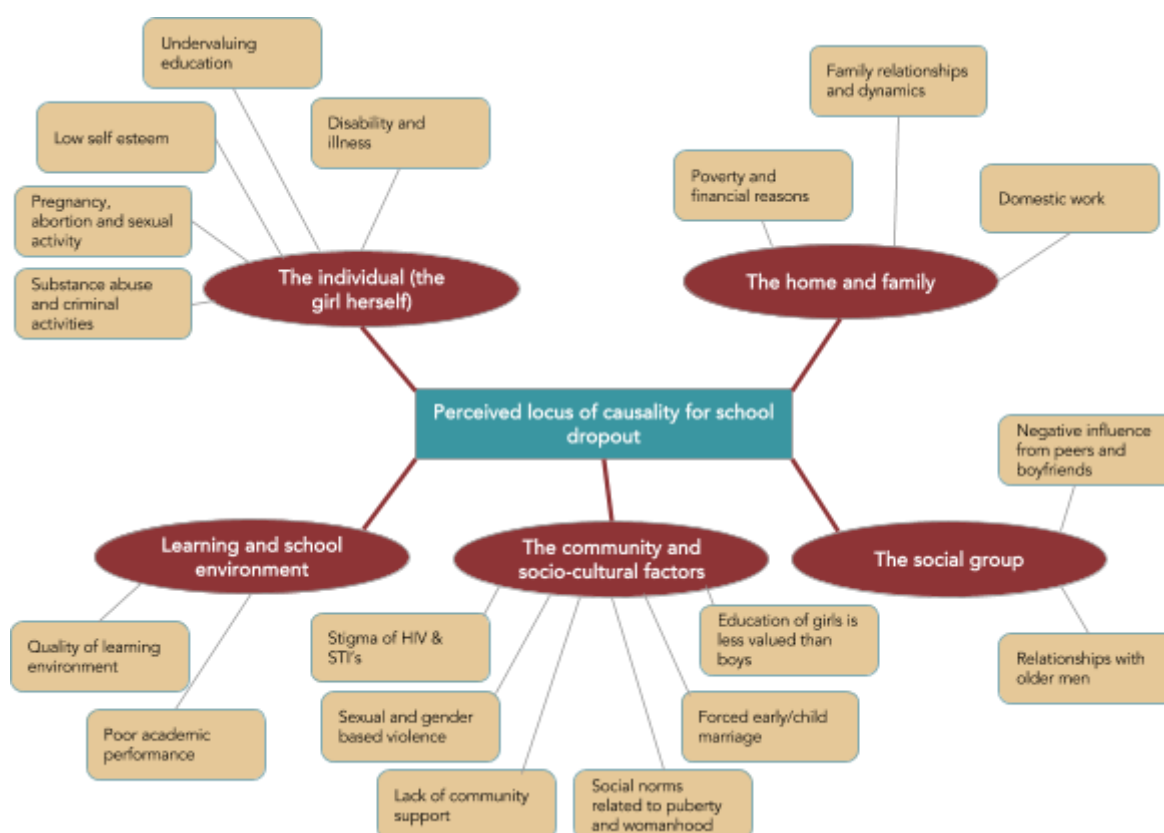

Figure 7: Thematic network on reasons for school dropout

This network represents an exploration of participants' opinions on the reasons why girls in Kenya drop out of school. King and Hill (1993) describe a framework for educational decision-making whereby actions that result in entering, continuing, or dropping out of school occur at several sequential points or decision nodes. They state that at each point the

decision for or against schooling may be influenced by characteristics of the individual, the home, the community, the school, and the school system (p110). Adapted from this framework, we identified these as the perceived loci of causality that would result in the girl dropping out of or continuing in school. In this case, the cause could be either internal, that is, arising from dispositional factors (personality, skills, motivation, values) and lifestyle of the girls (e.g., drugs use, sexual activity), or could be external, that is, as a result environmental, social and cultural factors that hinder girls to proceed in their education.
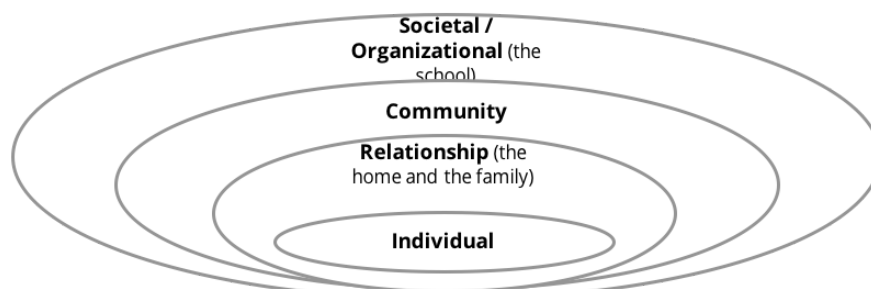

Figure 8: Social Ecological Model[10]

Outcomes related to education are determined by a complex interplay of these factors as individuals are embedded simultaneously in social groups, families, communities. The Social Ecological Model is a framework that helps to explain the interactions between an individual and his/her environment, suggesting that for effectiveness in interventions, it is necessary to act across multiple levels of determinants at the same time.

The home and the family had the highest frequency, with 1042 messages falling in this category (893 from Ramogi and 149 from Ghetto).

The individual

This organising theme refers to audience beliefs that school dropout is caused by factors relating to the girl herself, and to her dispositional characteristics, abilities, or lifestyle. This was the second most cited reason, with 741 messages in this category (586 from Ramogi and 155 from Ghetto).

> "The girl must have been deceived by some guy and got her pregnant and now she is feeling ashamed to mingle with her friends." Male, Tassia.

> "Some girls see no reason for education and consider marriage, some parents also don't value education but value dowry". Unknown

The most prevalent sub-theme within this category is *pregnancy, abortion and early sexual activity* (with 442 messages from Ramogi and 116 messages from Ghetto). This highlights the need to address Sexual and Reproductive Health related issues among adolescent girls and young women in the community in order to reduce chances of school dropout.

The home and family

Overall, the most prevalent category of audience beliefs regarding school dropout was related to the role of caregivers and guardians in a girl's education, with 1042 messages

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[10] Source: Adapted from the CDC, "The Social-Ecological Model: A framework for Prevention" (https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/overview/social-ecologicalmodel.html)

received (893 from Ramogi and 149 from Ghetto). Audience members explained that a family's attitudes towards a girls education, and therefore the support they give, or lack of support, will have an impact on the likelihood of a girl continuing education.

> "It is lack of proper support from parents, there should be proper support" 17 years, Kisumu

Some mentioned that the family home situation also plays a role: whether she is with her nuclear family or with relatives, whether there has been a family break-up, the income level of the household, as well as household duties such as caregiving and housekeeping.

> "May be she knew there was not enough money for her to go to secondary school. That is why she left school in class eight." Female, 19 years, Usonga, Siaya

> "There are many challenges that could lead to this. One is that there was no one to support her financially." Male, 24, Kokwany, Homabay

> "She could have dropped out of school due to too many household chores which deprived her of study/school time." Male, 24, Migori

> "The parents separated. And none of them struggled to educate this child." Male, Homabay

Poverty and financial reasons was the most prevalent sub-theme within this category (with 548 messages from Ramogi and 121 messages from Ghetto).

The social group
We received 560 messages related to the girl's social group (444 from Ramogi and 116 from Ghetto). These are the people who closely surround the girl, outside of her direct family, and would have the ability to influence her life decisions. These include her peers and friends, including those at school, and those she could be in a relationship with. For example, some mentioned that the girl may be in a sexual relationship with an older man, or 'sponsor', who offers her financial support.

> "Maybe she stopped going to school because her boyfriend convinced her to stay with him and live with him like his wife" Male

> "It might be due to peer influence from 'sponsors' the way they call it." 26 years, Homabay

Negative influence from peers and boyfriends was the most prevalent sub-theme within this category (with 425 messages from Ramogi and 109 messages from Ghetto).

The community and socio-cultural factors

287 messages included beliefs about school dropout that are related to influences from neighbours, religious institutions, the wider society, the local government and administration, and other duty bearers (200 from Ramogi and 87 from Ghetto). The cultural norms and

beliefs held by the members of the community play a role here, including collective beliefs about girl child education.

> "It could be that Atieno listened to bad teaching from some of her friends." Female, Kolwa, Kisumu

> "Perhaps, she was discouraged by her parents' reluctance to pay her fees because they don't treasure educating female kids." Female, 16 years.

Harmful practices such as sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) and forced early marriage were suggested as reasons why a girl may drop out of school.

> "Many girls do not go to school because they are sexually abused by their close relatives, and it is hard for them to open up." Male, Kajiado

> "Maybe Atieno was raped and couldn't share with anybody more so if she is an introvert." Female, Mbita, Homabay

> "Due to poor life that she led, and now she has grown up she can easily be cheated on by men within her vicinity that say 'I will marry you and take you for a course/education'". Female, 19 years, Homabay town, Homabay

> "Maybe she could have been pushed to forced marriage". Unknown

Fear of shame and stigma in the case of HIV and STIs, as well as in the case of the physical changes happening in the body during puberty were given as factors that may affect the girl's schooling.

> "Some girls are HIV positive and may be afraid of stigmatization" Male,18, Machakos

Forced/early marriage was the most prevalent sub-theme within this category among listeners of Ramogi (with 66 messages) while *stigma of HIV & STI's* was the most prevalent sub-theme within this category among listeners of Ghetto (with 41 messages).

The learning and school environment

This concerns all the actors within the school environment such as the teachers, the school administration, and fellow students (61 messages, 16 from Ghetto and 45 from Ramogi). Does the girl have a peaceful environment in school, or could she be a victim of bullying by teachers? Punitive academic measures such as repeating classes were also cited by the radio audience as playing a role.

> "Atieno could have dropped out of school due to torture from classmates/peers." Female, 25 years, Usenge, Siaya

> "Dropout of girls from school is due to some teachers who emphasize so much on mistakes done by such students instead of counseling them." Male, Ahero

Quality of learning environment was the most prevalent sub-theme within this category (with 31 messages from Ramogi and 13 messages from Ghetto).

3.2.2. Socio-demographical differences in socio-cultural beliefs

Men, more than women tend to think that the social group is responsible for girls dropping out from school, namely sexual relationships with men and negative influences from peers and boyfriends [X-squared = 4.38, df = 1, p-value < 0.05]. This belief can lead to stigmatization from men toward girls who dropped out of school, assuming that they were influenced by their boyfriends or they prefer the life that a 'sponsor' can provide them. At the same time, it seems to show that men think that girls lack agency to make decisions about their lives and make decisions based upon the advice or influence of men.

In urban areas, people tend to mention more than rural areas reasons more related to community [X-squared = 5.06, df = 1, p-value < 0.05]. This result suggests that in urban areas people are more willing to reflect on the effects of gender norms and early marriage on girls dropping out of school as they are more exposed to other ways of thinking and feel more comfortable to challenge those norms. In rural areas, gender norms could probably be too ingrained for people to distance themselves and think about them or even to recognize them and their effects on their lives.

3.3. Womanhood and puberty

The second radio show presented a scenario of a secondary school girl (called *'Akoth'* in Radio Ramogi and *'Trish'* in Ghetto Radio) who has been having trouble attending school when she is on her period due to strong pain and fear of soiling her uniform. The audiences were then asked: ***"Do you think she should go to school during her period? Yes/No? Why?"***. This topic was slightly less popular overall. A total of 1121 people participated, with 754 from the Ramogi shows and 367 from the Ghetto shows.

3.3.1. Socio-cultural beliefs

Similar to the approach above, we developed a coding frame based on the messages which had all the ideas contained in the messages, grouped into basic themes. We used the same combined inductive and a priori approach in developing the themes.

The majority of those who participated felt that the girl should go to school (86.0% - 720 participants), compared to 14.0% (117 participants) who felt that she should not go to school while menstruating. There were some slight variations by demographic groups as follows:

- **Gender:** 12.4% of female participants as opposed to 27.6% of male responded with "No" [she should not go to school]
- **Radio stations:** 21.6% of those responding from the Ghetto shows said "no", compared to 10.9% of those in Ramogi
- **Age groups**: 16.6% of those below 25 years old said, '"no", compared to 13.6% of those 25 and older.
- **Urban versus rural:** 15.3% of those in rural, and 17.4% of those in urban said "no"

As this was a 'Yes/No' question, we categorised the responses broadly under those who said 'yes' [she should go to school] and those who said 'no' [she should not go to school]. Figure 15 below shows the proportion of men who said 'yes' or 'no', disaggregated by gender and radio station.
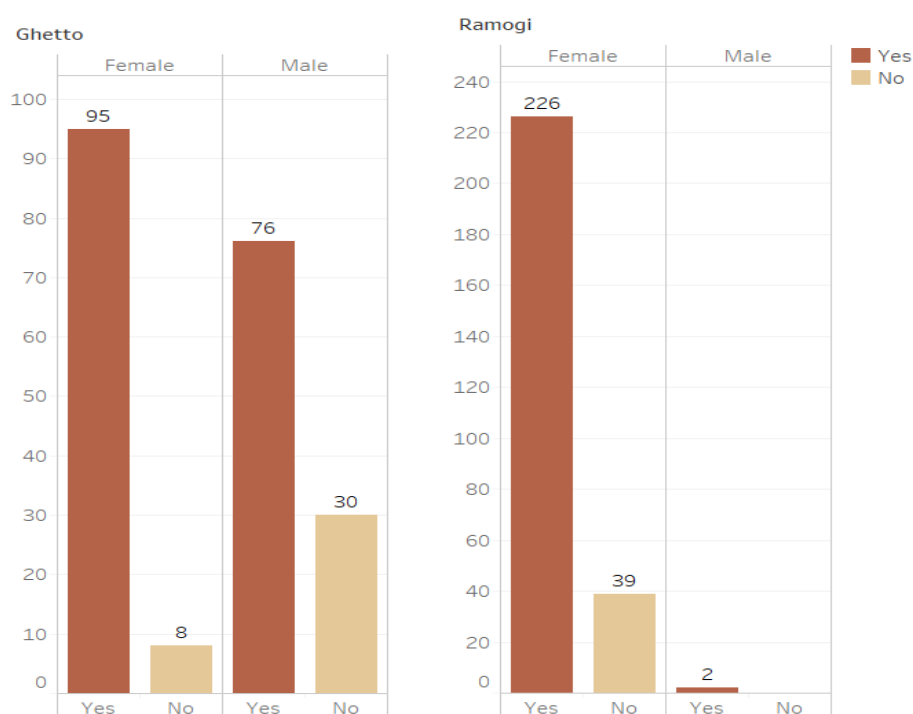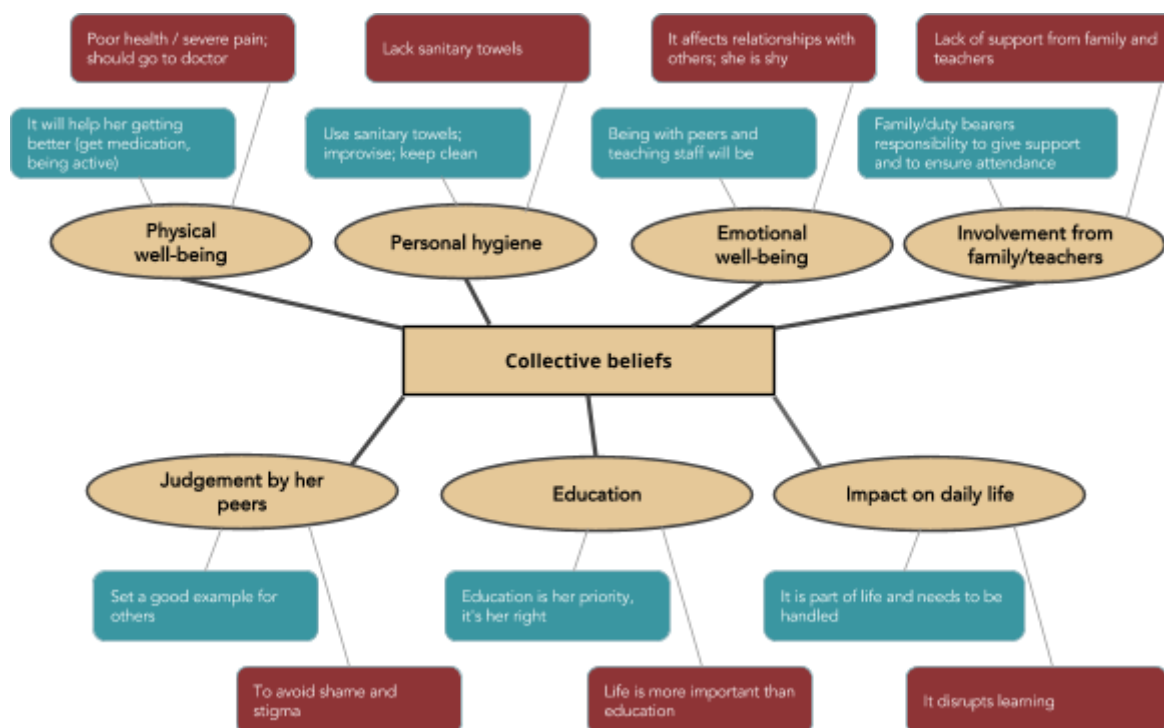

Figure 15: 'Should the girl go to school when menstruating?' By gender and station

The figure below is a thematic network that outlines the basic themes and organising themes developed from those who said 'yes' [she should go to school] as well as 'no' [she should not go to school]:

From the messages received, there seemed to be two points of view among those who said 'yes'. There were those who said "yes, she should go" and then proceeded to give the reason, but there were also those who said "yes, she should go, but only if she has support, medication and materials…", among others.

Impact on daily life

One of the most common attitudes expressed among participants was that menstruation, and the pain and discomfort that often accompany it, is just a normal part of life (269 messages with 215 messages from Ramogi and 54 messages from Ghetto). Since all women experience it, that it is a natural, biological process, and that *"women are strong"* according to one of the participants, she should not let it disrupt her daily life and go to school. An idea in this category was that menstruation is something she should learn to to deal with and endure, as it will continue for many years.

> "Akoth should go to school because receiving menses is a normal thing to all girls. She should stay close to her mother or a female teacher and explain her challenges." Female, 25 years, Babadogo, Nairobi County

> "This girl should look for a lasting solution because periods will be there for a long time and she can't skip school every time she is on her periods" Female, Limuru, Kiambu

> "She ought to be going to school all the time, whether receiving her periods or not."
> Female, 18, Kisumu

> "Should go to school since menses indicate she is normal and her body is functioning well" - Female, 17 years, Kiambu

A few saw it as negatively impacting daily life, such that a girl on her period will be uncomfortable, and not able to concentrate or participate in school. As her learning is disrupted, she should not attend (26 messages with 19 messages from Ramogi and 7 messages from Ghetto).

> " She should not go to school because it is very uncomfortable and she will not be able to concentrate in class"- Male, 20 years, Kiambu

> "She shouldn't go to school because she is shy and she will not be confident enough before other students." - Unidentified

Personal hygiene

298 messages expressed the sentiment that the girl should still attend school when menstruating, but only if she can maintain her personal hygiene and self-care, most notably having the necessary sanitary protection. Most referred to sanitary pads, and less frequently, that she could improvise if she could not afford or have access to pads.

269 messages (with 192 messages from Ramogi and 77 messages from Ghetto) said, "yes" [she should go to school], though there is frequent use of the words *"she should go but…."* or *"as long as she has…."*. It therefore assumes that some pre-conditions need to be met, that may not be within her control.

29 messages (with 9 messages from Ramogi and 20 messages from Ghetto) said' "no" [she should not go to school], often recognised school as important, but that it may not be practically possible for the girl to attend school without sanitary protection.

> "She should go to school but make use of sanitary pads when experiencing her menstrual cycle." Male, 28, Bandani, Kisumu

> "She should go because I am in the same situation and I usually go, so long as she has sanitary towels she should go ." Female, Kangundo

> "Currently, we have sanitary pads distributed in schools to be used in case of emergency. So menstruation should not prevent her from attending school. Education is her wealth in future." Male, Homabay

> "She should not go to school if she does not have pads, and also she may be too shy, and her mood may be affect her and make her unable to concentrate." Female, 17 years, Kiambu

> "I would advise Trish that school is important, however if she has no pads then she would rather stay at home because she could be subjected to stigmatization." Male, Ngong, Kajiado

Emotional wellbeing

178 messages (with 164 messages from Ramogi and 14 messages from Ghetto) expressed the idea that the girl should go to school as it will benefit her emotional well-being by seeking assistance, counselling and advice from her peers or teachers. Some of the participants state that she should go to school, *but* share her concerns with her friends or teachers. The participants specify that she should seek help from female teachers, or school matrons, as they will have the necessary experience to be able to assist her.

> "It would be better for her to go to school and seek advice from her colleagues." Male, 18 years, Mukuru kwa reuben, Nairobi

> "Akoth should go to school. She will be helped by female teachers who are more experienced in handling such cases. And she also needs to understand that menstruation is common to all girls." Male, 27, Uriri, Migori

> "She should go to school without any fear because she can get help from female teachers and explain her challenge. Am sure they fully understand what it is to be in such a situation." Female, Mahinga, Siaya

On the other hand, 21 messages (with 13 messages from Ramogi and 8 messages from Ghetto) mentioned the negative impact on a girl's emotional well-being if she goes to school during her period, for example, it may detrimentally affect her relationships with her school peers.

> "Should not go because the process leads to emotional imbalance and mood swings that can affect her relationship with boys" Unknown

> "Should not go to school because she is shy and she will not be confident enough before other students" Unknown

Involvement from family and teachers

136 messages (with 132 messages from Ramogi and 4 messages from Ghetto) pointed to the role of parents and guardians, teachers, and the government to support the girl to be able to attend school. Audience members mentioned that the girl should be well prepared in advance for the first occurrence of menstruation, through discussions with the parents and teachers at school, thereby knowing what to expect and how to manage the blood flow and pain. Others even said that the school curriculum should be revised to include this topic.

> "Parents should ensure that she is well wrapped with sanitary pads. If she fails to go to school then she will miss a lot at the end of the year." Female, Awendo, Migori

> "The number of female teachers should be increased in schools to help/advice/assist young girls who face such challenges." Unknown

> "Akoth should go to school. It is proper that her parents to educate her on her periods and provide sanitary towels." Female, Oyugis, Homabay County

9 messages (with 8 messages from Ramogi and 1 message from Ghetto) pointed to a lack of support from duty bearers as a reason why the girl may not go to school.

"I think some teachers also contribute to the failure of the students in that sometimes they are too harsh that you even fear to consult them (are unapproachable)" Unidentified

"Some parents are not free (are too tough) with their daughters hence they can not share their problems" Unidentified

Judgement from her peers or teachers

92 messages (with 42 messages from Ramogi and 50 messages from Ghetto) explained that the shame and stigma the girl might feel, due to the reactions from her school peers as well as teachers, could be reasons to not go to school. Some said she may be too young to handle these feelings. In particular, some said that boys and male teachers will tease, bully, or laugh at her.

"This girl should not go to school because of embarrassment. There is no need to carry shame for four years just because of one week." Male, Kangemi, Nairobi

"Trish should not go to school if she is unable to get pads during her periods, because it would be too shameful and she is also young." Male, Nairobi

"Akoth cannot go to school because she feels ashamed of her condition. Personally, this made me drop out of school." Female, 18, Majiwa, Siaya

"Should not go as this will make boys laugh at her thus lower her self esteem"

"Should not go to school since some male teachers may make fun out of her situation/condition" - Unknown

Most messages in this category were related to the negative judgement of her peers if she attended school during her menses. However, two messages (from Ramogi) highlighted the positive judgement she may receive, as she would be a role model to other girls when on their periods.

"Yes, she should go to school so as to be an example to other girls." Male, Kung'ani, Homa-bay County

"She should go to school so that she becomes an example to other girls experiencing similar problem" - Unknown

Education

The importance of education, and that education is a girl's right, frequently arose (82 messages with 65 messages from Ramogi and 17 messages from Ghetto). A recurring idea was that the short-term benefits of missing school while menstruating outweigh the long-term costs, as missing classes or exams would jeopardise her future.

"She must make an effort to go to school since what has been while she is away will not be repeated." Male, Kisumu

"She should go to school because education is the key to success" - Male, Thika, Kiambu

"She should go to school because missing school when she received her periods for the first time will mean she will be missing for the subsequent ones." Female, 19 years, Kaugagi-Hawinga, Siaya

"It would be good for her to attend school with pads, and if the pain becomes unbearable, she can go back home, even if she attends for half a day, at least she will have learnt something." Unknown

On the contrary, only three messages (from Ghetto) suggested that education was not very important:

"She should not go to school life is important than education" - Male, 18 years, Wapa, Kiambu

"Should not go to school until her periods are over since it doesn't take long." Female, 19 years, Maringo, Nairobi

Physical well-being

Some participants approached the issue of menstruation as a physical, biological or medical issue, such as the physical pain that's often associated with periods. With this understanding of menstruation, participants who said the girl should go to school (52 messages, with 32 messages from Ramogi and 20 messages from Ghetto) pointed to the benefits of physical movement to reduce menstrual pain, or taking medication. 45 messages (with 13 messages from Ramogi and 32 messages from Ghetto) said she should not go to school, and gave reasons were that the girl's blood flow and cramps might be too severe, and even a medical problem, and she should go to a doctor or the hospital instead of attending school.

"Yes but she should go to the doctor, he will tell you what to do" Female, 17 years, Nairobi

"When she experiences pain, it is better that she does exercise to keep her active. Or she can take panadol to relieve the pain." Female, Uranga, Siaya County

'If she uses sanitary pads she will be comfortable. When she experiences pain, she can do physical exercise to avert her attention on the pain.' Female, Kendubay

"She should be taken to hospital for treatment, she could be sick." Male, 25 years, Embakasi, Nairobi

"Akoth should not go to school when she experiences stomach cramps due to her menses." Female, Maseno, Kisumu

"She should not go to school because some people faint due to heavy flow. She should instead see a doctor. I also experience the same, mine is heavy and after that I faint, I usually take a painkiller called buscopan." Female, Githurai, Nairobi

3.3.2. Socio-demographical differences in socio-cultural beliefs

The analysis of chi-square to test the association between the themes and whether the respondents are from rural or urban areas revealed that the lack of involvement from family and teachers is a reason for girls not going to the school during their period mainly in rural areas [X-squared = 7.23, df = 1, p-value < 0.01]. This result suggest that this is an issue mainly in rural areas and justify the norm for girls missing the school during their period. Others say that girls should go to school but family and teachers should be responsible to support the girls to go to school during their periods.

A related idea in rural areas, more than in urban areas, is that girls should not go to school not to be exposed to their peers' judgement (e.g., boys making fun of them) - [X-squared = 5.71, df = 1, p-value < 0.05]. Parents and teachers should work as role models for other students to support the girls and protect them to the judgement of their peers.

Periods are not seen by the school community as normal both in urban and rural areas. Compared to urban areas, a reason for girls not going to school is that periods have a negative impact on her life as they disrupt learning.

These results suggest that interventions to promote girls to go to school during their periods should extend to their school community (teachers and male students) as well as their family in supporting girls and portraying periods as part of life.

The results of a binary logistic regression to explain answers to the question of whether girls should go to school during their periods showed that men across all age groups, both in rural and urban areas, are more likely to agree that girls should <u>not</u> go to school during their period.

This result suggests that men have a crucial role in encouraging girls going to school – probably one of the reasons they don't go because they know that men disapprove and feel ashamed if someone finds out they are on their period.

4. CONCLUSIONS

4.1. Insights & recommendations

This first interactive radio season gathered data to help answer research question 1: "What are the socio-cultural and gender-based beliefs that prevent girls staying in or returning to secondary school?" Following our analysis, we would like to draw attention to key insights and related recommendations that are relevant to the activities of Trócaire and the DREAMS project partners.

Barriers to education

Our research reaffirmed that school dropout is caused by a complex web of social factors and beliefs. The findings support a framework that recognises five key agents that play a role in a girl completing secondary school: The individual (the girl herself), the home and family, the social group (peers, relationships), the community and socio-cultural factors, and the learning and school environment.

The DREAMS partners activities currently target individual, community, and school level. Our report provides a theoretical framework to underpin this approach as well as to expand it to include family and social group levels -- the importance of which was reflected in the audience's responses.

Indeed, of the reasons for dropping out of school, home and family matters emerged as an important factor. Within this, poverty and financial reasons were frequently cited, as well as family relationships, such as a lack of parental support, family break-up or not valuing girl child education. Factors relating to the individual girl, such as her behaviours, attitudes, and dispositions, was another factor recognised as contributing to school dropout.

Insights suggest that although interventions at an individual level are important, it is also crucial that a girl's home and family environment are also considered. For example, community forums run by Girl Child Network could focus on family-related issues as well as raising parents awareness about the support they need to give to their daughters and the value of her education. In addition, greater advocacy for and commitment to free secondary schools in Kenya would help to overcome a common financial barrier to girls completing secondary education.

Womanhood and puberty

Most participants said that menstruation should not be a reason to avoid attending school, seeing it as a normal part of life as well as the importance of education. However, clear ideas emerged about what conditions need to be in place for a girl to go to school during her period.

One of the most prevalent barriers to attending school during menstruation was access to sanitary pads. Other barriers included a lack of adequate support and health education (i.e. awareness of what to expect during menstruation) from her family and teachers, and a negative school environment where a girl feels shame and stigma due to how she is judged and treated by her peers and teachers.

A prominent idea that supported a girl attending school during her menses was that it is just

a normal process and something to learn to manage. In addition, many saw the benefit to a girl's emotional and physical well being by attending school, where a girl can seek support and advice.

The barriers and facilitators mentioned above could be addressed or incorporated in community forums, and with the schools that DREAMS partners will be meeting in Nairobi and Siaya. The findings can be taken on board by Bridge Centres to support girls who are returning to secondary school. By understanding what might keep AGYW away from school while menstruating -- and even fall behind and dropout -- Bridge Centres can ensure their initiatives are informed and tailored to girls' realities.

Schools should be supported to become positive, enabling environments for AGYW, including providing free sanitary towels to those who require them. Teachers can be made aware of our findings to understand what AGYW need and they can provide, including emotional support, to be able to attend school while on their period. Additional education around menstruation, for AGYW as well as their male counterparts, would be valuable so that the girl can learn to better manage her periods, and so that her peers and teachers are less likely to be a source of judgement and shame and instead a source of acceptance and support.

4.2. Evaluation and lessons learned

The first radio season of three for the DREAMS IC partnership suggest that the Africa's Voices interactive radio approach is a valuable tool for gathering beliefs on issues affecting school attendance by adolescent girls and young women. 2835 people participated, and we conservatively estimate that at least ten times as many listened to the radio shows.

Our aim was to reach the target population (AGYW), which we were successful in doing along gender and age lines. Participation was high among young people, with 73.4% of participants being 16-24 years old. 69.9% of participants were female, which is noteworthy considering that male participation in radio discussions is usually three to four times higher than female participation.[11]

This success may be attributed to the topics of the shows, training of the radio presenters around inclusive participation, and testing of the radio scripts among the target population. We will aim for greater engagement from AGYW in subsequent radio series by working closely with DREAMS partners to publicise the radio shows through the Bridge Centres, community forums, and the One-2-One Integrated Digital Platform (OIDP) -- all of which are targeted at young girls.

Regarding location, participants were from over eight counties, including from the two target counties of Nairobi (14.6%) and Siaya (20.7%). However, overall the most engagement was from Homa-Bay (26.2%), with the vast majority contacting Radio Ramogi. This may be due to Radio Ramogi being very popular in Homa-Bay, and with less media options compared to Siaya where audiences have access to a wider variety of radio stations.

We received as many participants from Nairobi as we did from Kisumu -- which is not a target county. For the next season, we aim to boost participation from Siaya and Nairobi (especially informal settlements). To do so, we will work closer with the radio stations to train the

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[11] Lopes, C., Mudhai, O.F. et al, Interactive media audiences in Africa, (2015). Interactive media audiences in Africa: A comparison of four constituencies in Kenya and Zambia. In Politics and Interactive Media Working Papers, The Centre of Governance and Human Rights, The University of Cambridge. See: http://www.cghr.polis.cam.ac.uk/research-themes/dmvp/pima/pima-working-papers/pima-working-paper-4

presenter(s) on audience engagement techniques, as well being in the studio during broadcasts to prompt the host. We will also engage further with other partners engaging in activities in these areas to raise awareness and participation among those they interact with such as project participants at the bridge centres, community facilitators during community conversations, and the various OIDP channels.

In addition, we would advise that DREAMS partners further recruit radio as a way to spread awareness and understanding of their activities. In particular, some questions appeared in messages sent to the radio stations when Bridge Centres were launched (and after the Africa's Voices programmes), such as why Bridge Centres were not being opened in people's own locality. Radio can also be a tool to address misconceptions, such as around menstruation, that arose in audience messages. To do so would require Sexual and Reproductive Health experts to appear on the radio shows, and even answering questions in real-time.

Next steps

The next steps for Africa's Voices will include collaboratively working with the DREAMS partners to design and plan for the second and third seasons of radio shows due to be broadcast in November/December 2017. This will be based on the initial collective thinking of all the partners at the onset of the project, and will incorporate emerging ideas from this first phase and the insights from this report.

We will provide Trocaire, GCN, and LVCT Health with the opportunity to explore messages not contained in the report further using our interactive message exploration interface, providing necessary training as required.

Appendix: Scenarios

Radio show 1

[Atieno] was a primary school student in your village who sat for her KCSE exams last year and got good marks. She wanted to become a teacher when she completes her studies. However, she dropped out of school after class 8 without giving reasons.

What do you think were the reasons [Atieno] dropped out of school? Text your answers to this toll-free number: <number> starting with <keyword>

Radio show 2

[Akumu] is a Form 1 student in your village. She has been having trouble attending school when she has her period due to strong period pains and fear of soiling her uniform. She is considering not going to school.

Do you think [Akumu] should go to school during her period? Yes/No? Why?