



A Knowledge, Attitude and Practice Baseline Survey on Human and Women Rights in Six Districts in Kenya

A Research Report by Association of Media Women in Kenya

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Executive Summary

The Association of Media Women in Kenya (AMWIK) has been implementing a two year awareness programme on human and women rights using the concept of community radio listening group in Isiolo, Wajir, Malindi, Kwale, Naivasha and Kisumu since 2009. As part of the programme, AMWIK commissioned this baseline survey on knowledge, attitude and practice of human and women's rights in the six districts on April to inform the implementation of this project.

The purpose of the survey was to determine the information gaps on women's rights issues in the six districts to inform the implementation of the awareness programme on human and women rights in the project areas.

The key findings of the study are that awareness of human rights is not high with a third of the respondents not aware of their basic human rights. Awareness of rights of women is very low with only one out of 5 respondents mentioning the various issues touching on the rights of women. Awareness of laws on rights of women is equally dismally low with only about 14 percent and 6 percent of respondents mentioning the Constitution of Kenya and Sexual Offences Act respectively. However, an overwhelming majority of respondents perceive human rights to be important.

There is very low participation in both human rights and political processes such as Kriegler Commission, Waki Commission, TJRC, NCIC among others. Three out of four respondents have never participated in human rights processes. The main reasons for low participation are high illiteracy, ignorance of such process, lack of information on such processes and traditional practices that hinder women from active engagement in public life.

Government performance on human rights (food, health, housing, clean water, land and security among others) is lackluster except in education where it is rated as average. Government performance is similarly lackluster on all fronts of delivering on women's rights. Only a quarter of the respondents rated government performance as satisfactory in addressing physical assault, harassment, rape, incest, early marriage and girl child education. Slightly more women than men rated government performance as poor.

Up to a third of respondents revealed their personal rights have been violated. Similarly, a lot more than a third of respondents know a woman whose right has been violated by others. More respondents in Kisumu than other districts know women who have been battered followed by Wajir and Malindi districts. Unfortunately more than three out of four cases of abuses are not reported to relevant authorities for action.

The level of satisfaction with handling of cases of reported abuses is low. Close in laws are rated very highly with satisfaction levels of 98 percent in handling cases of wife battering. There is overwhelming dissatisfaction with the way government, village elders, clergy and close in laws handle cases of rape in communities.

Understanding of role of duty bearers is average with respondents indicating that government plays legal enforcement roles; community should discourage traditional practices that hurt women and civil society to do civic education and advocacy.

Respondents said the community should engage in community education of members about women's rights, protect the rights of women and encourage women to report cases of violations.

Preferred mass media for obtaining information on human rights are radio, television and newspapers in that order. Weekly use of mobile phones and internet is negligible. More females than men prefer radio to newspapers. Mass media is the preferred method of obtaining information on women's rights followed by interpersonal communication channels such as group meetings and seminars. Women prefer mobile phones, meetings and mass media in that order.

Other sources of information on human rights are chief's barazas, friends, women meetings, relatives and workmates. More women than men prefer women groups and spouses as sources of information.

Respondents suggested public education, awareness campaigns and legal instruments as ways of addressing challenges facing women in society.

In conclusion, understanding of human rights and women rights is still low; and participation in human rights and political process is also dismal. Therefore, there is need for sustained human rights education and advocacy to increase knowledge about fundamental rights and privileges in the districts. There is need for government to invest more resources to facilitate citizen participation in human rights discourses and political processes such as TJRC, NCCI, IIEC and constitutional reviews. Linkages should be made with civil society to complement the work of government.

Understanding of the roles of duty bearers is average but understanding of the roles of respondents in the political process is low with many indicating they can only play representation roles if given the opportunity. The implication is that many Kenyans still do not understand their civic responsibility role of holding the government accountable to deliver reforms and good governance. There is need to increase knowledge of people in the districts on their civic responsibilities to enable them understand their roles in the delivery of effective services, human rights and preservation and protection of women's rights.

Levels of human rights and women rights violations are very high and not acceptable because Kenya is a signatory to international protocols that require that they preserve and protect human and woman rights. There is need for greater awareness within the districts targeting ordinary people and those in leadership to help preserve and protect human rights and women's rights. Enforcement of existing laws should be a priority in the project districts.

There is understanding that the community should play an education and enforcement roles that promotes women rights. There is need to build the capacity of community based organizations to empower individuals and groups to preserve and protect the rights of individuals and women.

Mass media such as radio and television, especially local FM radio stations are important sources of information on human rights and women's rights. However, women's meetings, seminars and public meetings such as chief's barazas and faith meetings are also key in disseminating information on human rights and women's rights. The project should exploit the potential of both mass media and traditional channels of communication. The project should use multiple channels of communication that utilizes mass media for public sensitization and interpersonal communication channels to nurture attitude and behaviour change.