



The Views and
Perspectives of
Radio Ergo's
Female Listeners
in Mogadishu and
Baidoa, Somalia

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Schoolgirls in high spirits walking in 30th Street, Baidoa town,
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Foreword

The aim of Radio Ergo is to provide life-saving and life-enhancing information for Somalis - including the most vulnerable in society - to empower them to make better informed decisions on critical issues affecting their lives. The programming content covers issues including health; protection; livestock, agriculture and other livelihoods; education; rights; disaster risk reduction; climate change; migration, and more. In addition, the stories of men, women, youth, boys and girls across the regions, in towns, villages, and refugee camps, are explored and told by Radio Ergo's unrivalled network of 25 or more local Somali reporters.

Radio Ergo's shortwave transmissions cover the entire country, which is especially important as there is no national broadcaster in Somalia and most of the local FM radios serve mainly urban-based audiences.

Radio Ergo runs a mobile phone feedback platform, which is free to callers, enabling listeners anywhere in the country to leave a voice message sharing their comments, views, or plight. The platform gives a chance for everyone to be included in important planning, decision-making and response processes. The feedback leads to further reporting and programming on the radio, as well as providing an analysis of trends and needs to be shared with the humanitarian responders.

This study was conducted by researcher Shukria Dini PhD, with the support of IMS Programme Manager, Louise Tunbridge. Thank you to all those who contributed to the study as participants.

Radio Ergo is funded with the generous support of the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida), the Danish International Development Agency (Danida), and the Danish Refugee Council (DRC) through a sub-grant from the Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (USAID/OFDA).

The radio first went on air on shortwave in 2008 as an initiative of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN-OCHA) IRIN project. Since 2011, the radio has been run by International Media Support (IMS) as a component of a wider media development programme in Somalia.

Introduction

Conflict, displacement and perennial natural disasters including drought and floods have affected the people of Somalia socially, economically and politically. Adversity, however, has created opportunities alongside enormous challenges. Radio Ergo seeks to seize the opportunity to strengthen access to information and enhance people's awareness on important humanitarian and social issues in order to improve their lives and bring about positive change in the country.

Most of the participants in this research carried out in Baidoa and Mogadishu highlighted the important role Radio Ergo plays in enabling citizens to become well-informed and active agents of change in their respective communities. The high illiteracy rate combined with the rich oral culture provide Radio Ergo with a vibrant space in which to educate and inform different segments of the population so that they can meet the challenges they face head on and participate in the overall effort of rebuilding in Somalia. Furthermore, Radio Ergo is uniquely positioned as a communicator by its presentation of a different narrative, one that is positive, focusing on the resilience and creativity of the people of Somalia.

International Media Support (IMS), which runs Radio Ergo, commissioned this independent study in order to understand better the views and perspectives of female listeners on the programmes and their impact. The researcher, Shukria Dini, is a Somali-speaking gender expert with unlimited access to targeted women through her networks in Mogadishu and Baidoa, including universities, schools, women's groups and civil society organisations. Participants were selected based on their knowledge of Radio Ergo and its programming by calls put out through her networks. Although limited in terms of its geographical and demographic focus, this study has produced some valuable and thought-provoking qualitative material. These findings will be helpful for IMS as it reviews Radio Ergo's progress, achievements and future strategy. The findings also contribute to a knowledge base for further gender-related media work and activities in Somalia.

Methodology: The nuts and bolts

The primary objectives of the research were:

- To gather information from disaggregated groups of female radio listeners through focus group discussions (FGDs) about their listening habits and preferences, and in particular their views on Radio Ergo programming;
- To provide female listeners the space to articulate what they like or dislike about Ergo's programmes.

The research was carried out between 24 July to 8 August 2019 in Mogadishu and Baidoa. The consultant developed specific questionnaires containing open and close-ended questions to engage female listeners in both locations in semi-structured interviews. The interviews with women in both areas were all conducted face-to-face and focused on qualitative data collection.

In addition, two FGDs were held in Mogadishu, and two in Baidoa. Each group consisted of six – eight participants. The group dynamics brought out a range of different views and opinions, enabling the researcher to gauge female listeners' levels of awareness and preferences of existing Radio Ergo's programmes, as well as their interests in potential new topics and formats.

In these detailed probing conversations, the female listeners shared the programmes they listen to on Radio Ergo, what they like most about these programmes, the impact on their knowledge of certain issues affecting their lives and the overall community. In addition, the sessions queried who controls the radio in their households, who decides what programmes to listen to, and what future programmes participants would be interested to hear on Radio Ergo. Participants were also probed about the impact the programmes have on their perception and views about certain issues, how what they listened to changed their habits, and whether they discussed the programmes that they heard with others.

Finally, some questions touched on the participants' views on gender and the representation of women in Radio Ergo and whether this influenced in any way their preferences in tuning into certain programmes. They were asked if they notice more women's voices on Radio Ergo than on other radios, whether they liked hearing other women on the radio, and why it mattered. They were asked if there were enough voices of women on the radio, and which programmes presented by women journalists they liked the most.

Security issues and time constraints at the time limited the researcher's movements and access and meant that she could not reach out to older and IDP women in either Mogadishu or Baidoa. This was one factor that influenced the overall profile of the participants. The majority of the

participants were in their 20s (76.7%). They were predominantly urban (in terms of their current residence) and educated (university students or graduates). Most (73.3%) were unmarried. Discovering that Radio Ergo has a very dedicated and appreciative listenership among young educated women in urban areas came as something of a surprise, as it had been assumed that the core audience possibly comprised of older, uneducated and more rural listeners.

The majority (73.3 %) of the participants were university students or graduates. Seven out of the 30 had secondary school education and two were educated up to primary level. The profile of the participants in itself produced one significant finding of this research that

Radio Ergo has a strong following among young educated women residing in Mogadishu and Baidoa.

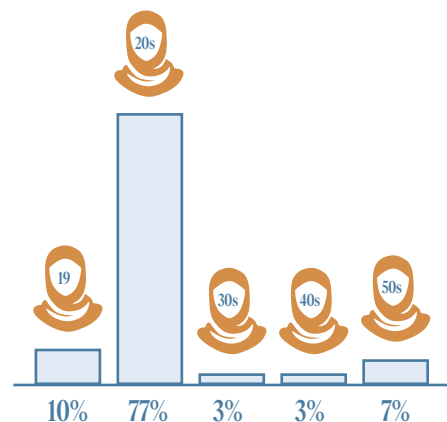


Figure 1:
Age of the Participants

Why this study?

With its emphasis on humanitarian issues, and judging from the usage of the feedback platform along with other sources of information and analysis, it is evident that Radio Ergo has a loyal audience among communities in the rural areas and those directly affected by drought, floods, displacement, poor services, conflict and exclusion.

However, there is a general paucity of audience research in Somalia, especially studies focusing on the numerous different audience groups across gender, age, geography, social background, and other possible dissections of the whole. For this particular study, it was decided to focus on women, in order to test some of the results of Radio Ergo's gender strategy that aims to get more female voices onto the radio and to disrupt the largely negative or narrow stereotypes of women in the Somali media.

Due to insecurity at the time, the research focused on the views and preferences of female Radio Ergo listeners in two urban centres, Mogadishu and Baidoa, where the majority of the participants turned out to be young and well educated. The results showed that the radio has an enthusiastic following among these women and presented several areas where IMS can seek to improve the service that Radio Ergo gives them.

Furthermore, the research offers a glimpse into how and why young females, especially, are consuming media, and what topics they are most interested in. IMS intends this to be the first in a series of local research studies into various different audience groups.



Form three students in Abdalla Derow Primary and Secondary School for girls in Baidoa. Photo: Muhyadin Husni/Radio Ergo 2019

What do young, educated Somali women think of Radio Ergo?

One key criterion for selection of the participants was that they already knew and listened to Radio Ergo. Most of the women (27 out of 30) acknowledged being regular listeners of Radio Ergo, while three said they tuned in occasionally.

More than half (16 out of 30) noted that they had been listening to Radio Ergo for a year or more. Some of this group said they had experienced internal displacement or other challenging changes in their circumstances, and that they had resumed listening a year ago or more having been regular listeners previously. Twelve women interviewed said they had been listening to Radio Ergo for between two to five years consecutively. During discussions, the researcher noted that the women described Radio Ergo as: a community radio, a humanitarian radio, a unique radio that focuses on critical humanitarian and social issues affecting people of Somalia living inside and outside Somalia. They stated that the radio does not focus on local politics, that it is a radio that tells extraordinary stories about ordinary people who may be refugees living in Dadaab refugee camps, IDPs in camps inside Somalia, and in towns and villages in Somalia. They said the radio amplifies voices of vulnerable populations affected by conflict, displacement and drought and who are struggling to cope with meagre resources.

The participants emphasized some of the characteristics and roles of Radio Ergo, as follows:

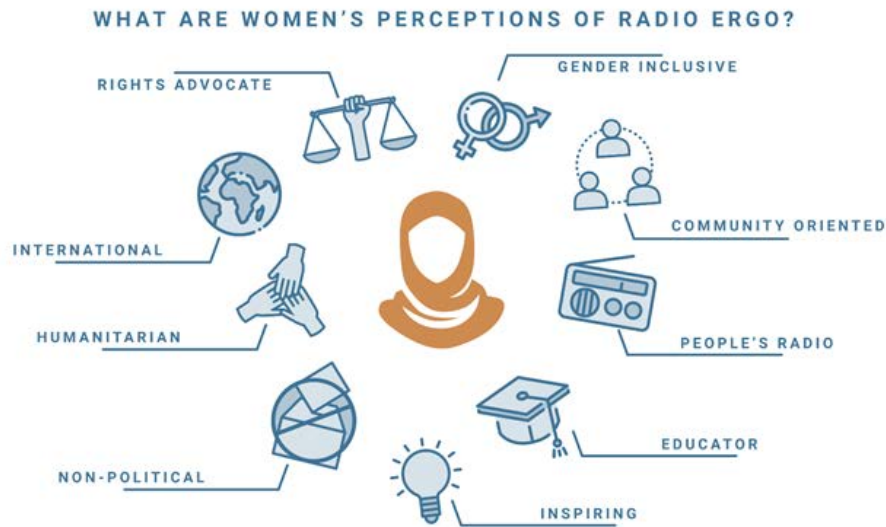
Humanitarian early warning: **"It is a radio that gives alerts about natural disasters that are to occur in areas in Somalia and this has saved many lives."** (Mogadishu participant)

Different from other radios: **"Radio Ergo is a radio that presents the stories of those who are less fortunate, the displaced, the refugees and pastoralists who are affected by drought. Their programmes focus on these groups, which are not considered important to be reported by other radios. By listening to Radio Ergo, I learned a lot about the plights of such groups."** (Mogadishu participant)

Positive stories: **"Ergo is where you find unique stories that are so uplifting and positive about individuals and groups affected by crises such as displacement and drought. These are the kind of stories that we need to hear rather than hearing violent stories and deadly events happening in our community."** (Baidoa participant)

Motivating and inspiring: **"We need Radio Ergo because it builds the morale of traumatized people by capturing real stories on the ground with less trauma and negativity."** (Mogadishu participant)

"The stories that we find on Radio Ergo touch our hearts and overall on our lives. Such stories demonstrate the power and resilience of individuals and people affected by so many tragedies – conflict, prolonged displacement, statelessness and drought." (Mogadishu participant)



Who decides what to listen to among female listeners?

Part of this study aimed to find out more about female listeners' listening habits, such as when and where they listen to the radio, and how they decide which radio or programme to listen to. Radio Ergo broadcasts daily on shortwave from 3pm to 4pm across Somalia. This is a time when many people have returned from work and school, and are at home, resting, socializing or catching up with family and can get information from the radio. Two thirds of the women interviewed in this study (20 out of 30) said they listen to Radio Ergo during the day. The remaining 10 participants said they listened in the evening or at night, on one of the local FM rebroadcasts.

In their respective homes, half of all participants in both cities (15 out of 30) said they themselves decide when to listen to Radio Ergo.

These participants said that in their households, there are two to three radios and a number of smart phones belonging to their family members. This allows them to make independent decisions about listening to Radio Ergo.

Five other women, who live with their parents, said that their fathers decide what to listen to on the radio, whilst another five said it was their mothers who decided when and what to listen to on the radio. Four who live with their extended families (grandmothers, aunts and uncles) said they do not decide on their own.

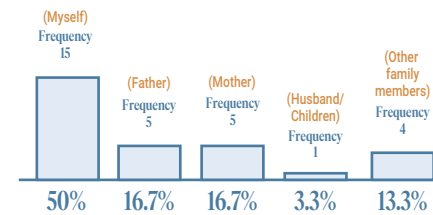


Figure 2: Who decides when and what to listen on the radio?

One woman interviewed in Baidoa noted that she uses her smartphone to listen to Radio Ergo and likes listening by herself.

All the participants said they listen to Radio Ergo while they are at home. It appears that the times of the broadcasts coincide with when they have free time for radio listening. All participants knew that Ergo airs from 3pm to 4pm on shortwave and then later in the evening on different local FM radios.

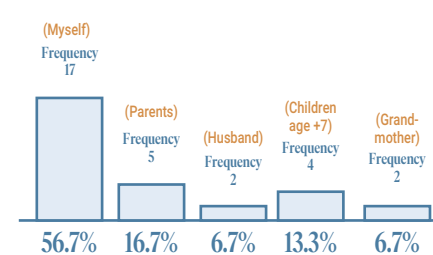


Figure 3: With whom do you listen Radio Ergo with?

The majority (17 out of 30) said they listen to Radio Ergo alone. Another five said they listen with either of their parents (father or mother), whereas four who are mothers said they listen with their children. The children's ages were noted to be from seven years and above. The listeners felt that the programmes were safe and appropriate for children from this age to hear. Two participants said they listen to Ergo programmes with their husbands, and two with their grandmothers. Figure 3 above shows how the participants listen across the family ties.

Almost half (14 out of 30) the female listeners interviewed said they listen to Radio Ergo every day or every night, while eight said they listen most of the time. Three said they listen to the radio twice a week, on Thursday and Friday, while five said they listen whenever they feel like it on a less regular basis.

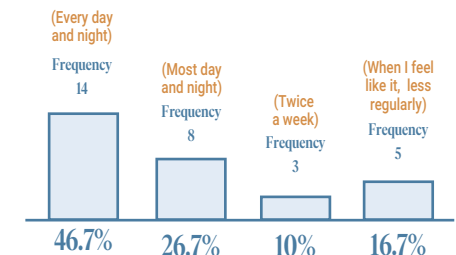


Figure 4: How often do you listen to Radio Ergo?



Nimo Muhyadin has been teaching Somali language in Abdalla Derow Secondary School for girls in Baidoa since 2007. She is a dedicated Radio Ergo listener and finds inspiration from the programmes. Photo: Muhyadin Husni/Radio Ergo 2019

Female Voices on Radio Ergo

Radio Ergo's gender strategy aims to ensure that at least one third of the voices across its programming are female. The strategy also aims to ensure that women and girls are represented in roles that do not stereotype them as victims or lesser members of society. They speak as mothers, students, graduates, breadwinners, businesswomen, role models, and so on. The programmes are presented by female and male journalists, although the radio acknowledges that it is harder to hire and retain female reporters in the field than males. This study sought

to gain some insights into how female listeners view the importance of hearing other female voices on the radio, and how the strategy is working.

The researcher asked participants whether they thought there were enough female journalists' voices on Radio Ergo. Half (15 out of 30) said they find sufficient female journalists' voices on Radio Ergo as compared to other local media in Somalia, whereas 13 said there were not enough female journalists' voices on Radio Ergo. Two said they did not know. Despite the diverse opinions, all of the participants acknowledged the importance of having sufficient female voices on Radio Ergo and across its programmes.

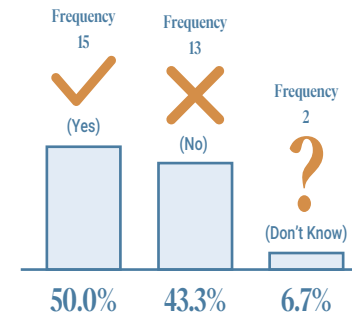


Figure 5: Female journalists' voices on Radio Ergo

Participants were asked if hearing female journalists on the radio increased their interest in tuning into Radio Ergo programmes. A big majority (21 = 70%) said it did, while nine women said it did not because they were attracted to Radio Ergo by the uniqueness of the programmes, rather than by the gender of its journalists.

"I like the skills and capacities of Radio Ergo's journalists that males and females possess. Because of this, I only care about the content of the programmes and not the gender of the journalists." (Mogadishu participant)

However, all the participants said they liked hearing female voices on Radio Ergo.

"As a female listener, I like hearing the voices of female journalists on Radio Ergo because female journalists can do better facilitation and presentation on topics on women's rights, FGM and family issues than male journalists." (Mogadishu participant)

"For me, I listen to Radio Ergo because of their great programmes, but also I want to gauge the skills of its female journalists and how capable they are to facilitate and present a particular programme." (Baidoa participant)

Listeners were asked whether there were enough female voices on Radio Ergo. The majority, (17 out of 30) said there were not enough female voices in the programmes. Ten out of the 30 were satisfied by the number of female voices. Three listeners had no opinion.

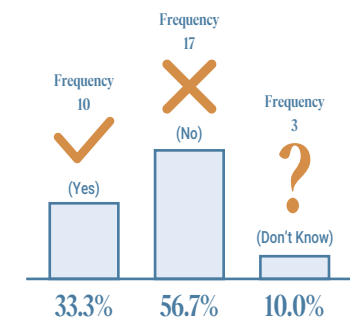


Figure 6: Are there enough female voices on Radio Ergo?

Discussions touched on the importance of striking a gender balance in Radio Ergo's programming. The participants were mostly highly gender aware and noted that Radio Ergo acted as a role model/standard-setter for other radios. Those who said there were not enough female voices expected that Radio Ergo could do more to promote female journalists.

“Female journalists are effective in presenting and facilitating stories and programmes that require gender sensitivity. For instance, a female journalist is in a better position to present a programme focusing on FGM and gender-based violence.”

One participant said female journalists used gender-sensitive language and showed strong awareness of the challenges facing women and girls in Somalia, which encouraged her to tune regularly into Radio Ergo. Participants affirmed that Radio Ergo’s journalists seemed gender sensitive in their reporting. Most of the stories focused on both men and women (and boys and girls) living in different situations. (It is worth noting that some Radio Ergo journalists received gender training in 2018).

Participants gave several reasons as to why they thought having female journalists on the radio was important. These included the requirement to enable women to participate and be represented in programmes; and the fact that female journalists brought different views and perspectives from male journalists. Some noted that female journalists were better placed to capture accurately the challenges facing women, and to interview women especially on sensitive subjects when male journalists may not gain access. It was also felt by a number of participants that female journalists acted as good role models and could encourage other women and girls to become journalists.

What programmes do female listeners prefer on Radio Ergo?

The participants in Mogadishu and Baidoa named some of their favourite programmes on Radio Ergo as ‘*Dhalandool*’ (Migration programme), ‘*Goobaad*’ (Women’s programme), and ‘*Codka*’ (Feedback programme), which are all regular weekly segments.

Other favourites mentioned were programmes on health and education; farming; small businesses; environmental damage caused by charcoal production; FGM and other harmful cultural practices; GBV; livelihoods; impact of drought; and a specific report on fundraising for weddings in Dadaab.

One participant in Baidoa shared that her 71-year-old grandmother is a regular listener of Radio Ergo and has a special dedicated phone, which she uses only to listen to Radio Ergo.

Participants underlined the uniqueness of Radio Ergo programmes. A listener interviewed in Baidoa stated:

“Ergo programmes are the teachers that we as listeners need to have – to be aware and be educated about certain issues affecting our lives.”

Another participant in Mogadishu said: *“One of my favourite Ergo programmes is the Tahriib (migration) programme.*



The radio is a source of information, knowledge and learning for many listeners including the very young. These girls interviewed in Sayidka IDP camp in Mogadishu said they listen to Radio Ergo and practise their writing skills. Photo: AliNur Salaad/Radio Ergo 2017

As a mother, I wanted to understand the risks involved in migration to a foreign land, and what we need to do as parents to prevent our children from making risky journeys.”

Another young listener said that the Ergo Radio programme on migration had deterred her from migrating to Europe or North America. She no longer has the ‘*buufis*’ (‘illness’ or ‘obsession’ to leave the country). According to a mother in Baidoa, the migration programme was one of the most popular and well liked in Somalia and has raised a lot of awareness among parents and youth.

Radio Ergo’s humanitarian information role was appreciated. One listener said: *“The programmes that I listen to, such as those on drought and floods, provide us with very important information on how*

to survive – information that we get from these programmes has saved lives. For instance, during the storms that took place in Sool region, people were encouraged to move to safe places to minimize the risks and vulnerabilities and this no doubt saved many people’s lives.”

Other programmes on livelihoods, recovery and women’s issues were described as powerful and useful for the audience. A listener in Mogadishu said that such programmes encouraged unemployed youth and women to start up their own small businesses, develop their own knowledge and skills to get out of poverty and stand on their feet.

“I listened to the programme that focused on fishermen in Bossaso. The programme taught me a lot. Before the programme, I did not know anything about fishing and the good seasons for fishing!”



This is Shinyeey Usgowe, who has worked in Baidoa livestock market since 2009 buying goats to sell on to exporters to the Gulf region. The radio tells the stories of women like her who are breadwinners for their families. Photo: Muhyadin Husni/ Radio Ergo 2019

Another listener said a programme about a young girl campaigning against FGM inspired her to participate in anti-FGM initiatives in her own community. She stated:

“Life stories, testimonies and hearing the actual voices of real people have captured my attention and made me a regular listener of Ergo programmes.”

Participants generally liked programmes on women’s issues, such as women’s economic empowerment, income-generating activities, FGM, domestic violence, and coping through drought. They appreciated how women were portrayed as hardworking individuals, resilient, creative and active members in their families and communities. It was also noted that women had benefited from the tips and information on how to set up and run successful businesses.

Radio Ergo was identified as a supporter of women:

“Radio Ergo is a radio that is in solidarity with Somali women – it examines issues that concern them and sheds light on the challenges facing them.”

Participants noted positively Radio Ergo’s attention to issues affecting women and girls in their communities and to raising awareness on the specific challenges facing women in Somalia.

The style of reporting and presenting such stories was seen as unique and attractive. The majority of the participants in

discussion praised the analytical capacities of Radio Ergo as a key factor differentiating it from other radios operating in the country. All the participants said that they listen to Ergo because they want to be aware of the issues affecting women and girls in their respective communities.

Some said they now understood the cultural and socio-economic barriers facing Somali women because of what they had heard on Radio Ergo. Furthermore, Radio Ergo was viewed as giving voice to the most vulnerable and voiceless individuals and groups in IDP camps, refugee camps and poor urban settings. The participants were able to share examples of how Radio Ergo through its programmes provided a much needed space for those whose voices are not heard on mainstream radios to articulate their own issues and concerns. Participants shared that hearing the voices of the marginalized created awareness and empathy among listeners. One of the participants interviewed in Mogadishu stated:

“Through Radio Ergo programmes, I am aware of the sufferings and challenges facing those who are the less fortunate ones and those caught in the poverty trap.”

The discussions pointed to the richness and diversity of Radio Ergo programmes and the ways in which they give attention to the specific needs and concerns of particular groups of people within Somalia.

“Radio Ergo’s programmes tackle issues that concern refugees, IDPs, women, youths, the returnees and populations

affected by drought. Whenever I listen to these programmes, I feel that issues that affect diverse groups are thoroughly explored and discussed. I hope that our society, particularly our government, will pay attention to the challenges facing them and provide opportunity to the vulnerable population in our country.” (Baidoa participant)

Radio Ergo’s programmes touch the minds and hearts of listeners across Somalia, participants said, by capturing the reality on the ground yet making coverage positive. One listener interviewed in Mogadishu said: *“We need a radio like Ergo that builds the morale of traumatized people like us.”*

Participants cited hope and courage illustrated in the programmes to overcome dependency on humanitarian assistance, hopelessness and poverty.

Impact of Radio Ergo on Female Listeners’ Perception and Thinking

This study explored the extent to which Radio Ergo has influenced listeners’ thinking and perception on certain issues in their own communities.

Participants described Radio Ergo programmes as educational and profound in terms of providing listeners with relevant information and knowledge on issues affecting them. Some listeners

noted how much they have learned from the programming. For instance, most noted an enhanced awareness of the risks of irregular migration gained from the programme on migration. One participant shared that she tried to migrate to Europe at the age of 16, but was stranded in Morocco for a couple of years and her mother pressured her to return to Somalia. A year later, she returned to Baidoa, completed her secondary school education and currently works with a ministry in Southwest State government. She attributed her return to the awareness and persuasion of her mother, who is a regular listener to Radio Ergo.

Another listener in Baidoa said she wanted to migrate, leaving her children and family behind, but after hearing Ergo’s ‘tahrīb’ (migration) programme, she changed her mind and decided not to go. She became an activist informing her close family members, friends, and neighbours not to migrate illegally. She has convinced three of her friends not to migrate. Two of them later set up a small business that is thriving.

A listener in Mogadishu shared how she persuaded a neighbour against migrating: *“With updated information and knowledge from Radio Ergo, I was able to engage in heated discussion with one of my neighbours, who had a bachelor’s degree and was unemployed at that time. I brought up the discussion about how risky it is for young people to leave their homeland, without knowledge, any support and*



Radio Ergo reporters are trained to ensure that women are given ample opportunity to speak and their voices are included in the programmes. Here, our Baidoa reporter Muhyadin Husni interviews displaced women about conditions in one of the town’s IDP camps. Photo: Radio Ergo

education and go to a foreign land. My neighbour was a good debater and shared with me all the factors forcing him to opt for tahrīb. However, after a number of debates and discussions, he was convinced that life is better in Somalia than romanticizing about an unknown life in a strange land. He went back to school and studied another field. He still lives and works in Mogadishu.” (Mogadishu participant)

The programme has generated discussion about the impact on families and ways of stopping human traffickers who facilitate the often deadly journeys by Somali youth, whose capture by militia leads to ransom demands from their families.

Some listeners in Mogadishu and Baidoa noted how Ergo programmes had inspired

them as citizens, businesswomen, mothers, activists and students to improve their lives and that of their families in a very challenging environment.

“The Radio Ergo programmes inspired me and encouraged me to play my role as a citizen, to be innovative and contribute to the betterment of my country. I can also add that it enhanced my feelings towards humanity. I teach IDP children in some of the IDP camps in Mogadishu.” (Mogadishu participant)

“Stories about young, old, men and women are presented as heroes, who have taken initiatives to improve their lives and their families, and without Radio Ergo, we would not have heard such inspiring stories.” (Mogadishu participant)

All listeners noted that Radio Ergo helps war-affected people to hear positive and inspiring stories that are in the media generally. Positive stories highlight the agency of individuals who are considered to lack agency and 'entity' – the refugee, the internally displaced person, the widow (er), the nomadic person, and the drought victim.

In addition, some listeners shared the impact of programmes on small business, farming, trade and livelihoods and how they have encouraged people in their respective communities. One young woman in Baidoa said listening to the radio enabled her to generate debate among her female relatives and friends about the importance of women being economically independent.

"Whenever I listen to their programmes, I get fired up and began to believe in my power and the power of other women that we are not hopeless individuals but rather active agents who can do a lot for themselves." (Baidoa participant)

During discussions, women shared that they had improved their knowledge and practice of hygiene in their own homes. They also noted their understanding of the importance of education and its profound impact on people lives, especially women. One participant shared how the farming programme on Radio Ergo had motivated her to work on her grandfather's farm and enabled them to adopt innovative techniques to increase their yields.

The study shows that Radio Ergo programmes are influencing female listeners to become activists. One listener interviewed in Baidoa said she had become an advocate for girls' education after learning from Radio Ergo. She discussed the importance of education in her own school and appealed to female classmates not to drop out. Her advocacy convinced some girls to stay on and complete secondary school.

A listener shared how Radio Ergo had shaped her perception towards FGM:

"After listening to a story on Radio Ergo about a 14-year-old girl who campaigned against FGM, I was touched and asked myself, why can I not be like that young girl and stand up for girls? I began to appeal to my mother and aunts not to cut their daughters and saved my younger sister from FGM. I was able to convince my mother not to cut my young sister. I was able to educate my mother about the severe effects of FGM."

The programmes have changed perceptions, as illustrated by one of the older women interviewed:

"Before, we believed that FGM was religiously required. However, after listening to Ergo radio programmes, we are fully aware that FGM is not required in Islam."

A Radio Ergo report about a young girl forcibly married to an older man had generated a lot of discussion across Somalia, according to participants,

particularly as the girl went to court and won a ruling in her favour. It was agreed that Radio Ergo had created awareness over rights and violations committed particularly against women and children.

Stories about poverty, discrimination and social exclusion aired on Radio Ergo are also generating public debate and dialogue and opening minds. Listeners in both locations referred to a memorable report about a young man and woman in Dadaab refugee camps who decided to marry, but the woman's family refused him because he was poor. Listeners argued that it was wrong for the woman's parents to reject her marriage to the young man because of his socio-economic status.

Discussions revealed that the programmes on health were popular among female listeners and had triggered changes in behaviour. Listeners cited ways to prevent the spread of cholera, diarrhoea and other communicable diseases as heard on the radio.

A listener in Mogadishu said Radio Ergo had enlightened her about child nutrition:

"I learnt from Ergo radio the benefits of breastfeeding for children. My younger sister is a mother of three children and she did not like breastfeeding. After listening to the Ergo programme on breast feeding, I shared the knowledge with my sister and assisted her to breastfeed her children. She knows now the importance of breastfeeding children for the first two years of their life."

Radio Ergo – 'the connector'

Radio Ergo provides reliable information to its wide audiences across the country. All listeners agreed the radio had improved their understanding of humanitarian and social issues. Tellingly, the participants identified Radio Ergo as 'the connector.' For instance, some highlighted Radio Ergo's linkage of vulnerable populations to each other and to aid agencies.

One listener interviewed in Baidoa pointed out: *"Through Radio Ergo, IDPs, returnees, refugees in Dadaab and the pastoralists have a voice and we hear their struggles across the country."*

In addition, Radio Ergo's programming seeks to prevent or mitigate the effects of natural disasters. Listeners provided examples of programmes assisting vulnerable populations to access information about imminent floods, enabling them to save their lives and property and relocate to higher ground.

By accessing reliable information and knowledge, listeners shared that their thinking and perceptions have become more positive. Enhanced awareness on social issues has enabled them to engage family members, neighbours and friends in discussion. Listeners said they often share information and knowledge with those who do not listen to the radio. Some listeners



Somali women play a huge role in the economy and are very often the primary or sole income earners for their families. This picture shows women selling fruit and vegetables in Dhobeylaha market in Baidoa. Photo: Muhyadin Husni/Radio Ergo 2019

stated that they encourage their family and neighbours to listen to Radio Ergo and to share the knowledge they learned.

One participant, who is a teacher, said Ergo had inspired her to conduct awareness raising on the importance of girls' education. *"I work in a girls' school in Baidoa. I learned a lot of tips from Ergo programmes. The programmes have enhanced my mentoring techniques and engagements with parents and girls."* (Baidoa participant)

The study showed that Radio Ergo acts as a connector because its programmes frequently provoke discussions among female listeners about topical issues and events. All of the interviewed participants stated that they had participated in discussions based on programmes aired on

Radio Ergo among their family members, neighbours and friends. For example, a student approached the dean of her university in Mogadishu asking him to host a forum about the risks of migration. She mobilised students, including her classmates, and 80 students attended the forum.



Students from Baidoa Primary and Secondary School walking after classes. Photo: Muhyadin Husni/Radio Ergo 2019

What makes Radio Ergo programmes stand out?

The research sought the views of female listeners on what they like about Radio Ergo programmes and why they find the radio distinctive from others operating in the country. The interviewed parties described Radio Ergo as different and unique in its humanitarian focus, as opposed to focusing on local politics, as well as observing its journalists' competence and professionalism. Female listeners interviewed in Mogadishu and Baidoa gave a number of descriptions of what they liked about Radio Ergo's programmes when compared to other radios, which are captured below.



Participants recognized that whilst the programming was often about hardship and loss, Radio Ergo took a positive approach to the subject matter. One of the listeners interviewed in Mogadishu shared:

“Radio Ergo looks at positive stories. Its programmes change the negative narratives and perceptions of Somalia and its people. Their programmes present positive narratives and stories about vulnerable groups: The refugees, the IDPs, and the pastoralists.”

Another listener in Baidoa said: *“I get valuable information from Ergo programmes that I cannot get from other radios. Such programmes shed light on inspiring stories of ordinary people, who undertake initiatives to improve their lives and provide service to others in their community.”*

What else do female listeners want to hear on Radio Ergo?

The women interviewed showed interest in new programmes and topics that may not have been tackled by Radio Ergo. While all the participants concurred that Radio Ergo programmes cover a diverse range of humanitarian and social issues, female listeners suggested many topics for new programmes as well as issues they would like to hear more about. The following list captures some of their interests and the priorities and challenges they see in their society:

1. Youth violence.	2. Marriage – how to choose suitable partners and address marital problems.	3. Negative effects of substance abuse.
4. Youth and women entrepreneurship.	5. ‘Get to know your country’ – snapshots of history and geography.	
6. High divorce rate in Somalia – explore the underlying causes and the impact on women and children, with help for women to cope beyond divorce.	7. Good parenting.	9. Children’s programmes.
	8. How to start up a small business in Somalia.	
10. Street children – root causes and effects on society.	11. Illiteracy and how it affects women’s empowerment.	12. Traditional conflict resolution and the role of women.
13. Negative mental health effects of social media.	14. Job creation for university graduates.	15. Poetry prize competitions.
16. Climate change and environmental protection.	17. Reproductive health awareness.	18. Programme to enhance women and youth political participation and decision-making processes and leadership.
19. Disability for men and women.	20. Rights of women in Islam.	21. Harmful cultural practices.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Radio Ergo is seen as a critical initiative in bringing to the fore the voices of vulnerable populations in Somalia. According to the largely young, mostly educated female listeners interviewed in this study, Radio Ergo focuses on important humanitarian and social issues in Somalia and is refreshingly free from clan politics. The radio stimulates rich and healthy discussions and dialogues among Somalis living inside and outside the country and provides much needed information that can transform their lives.

These female listeners see Radio Ergo as laying the foundation for a much-needed space where vulnerable populations can have a voice, articulate their specific needs, access humanitarian assistance, and communicate their needs to humanitarian organizations. In addition, the radio is generating healthy dialogue and debate for the people of Somalia, who have borne the brunt of the protracted conflict and natural disasters. Radio Ergo allows its female listeners to recognize their roles and responsibilities as citizens engaged in rebuilding their lives in a new Somalia.

Despite successes and achievements, the participants in Mogadishu and Baidoa noted areas for improvement. They wanted an expansion of broadcasting hours and many additional programmes and topics, as indicated above. They were particularly interested in programming on migration and women. They also wanted to hear more female voices on the radio, even though they recognized that Radio Ergo pays more

attention to gender inclusion than most other radios in Somalia. They felt there was an imbalance in the number of female journalists on the radio, which could be improved. A number of the participants also requested an increase in the number of articles posted on Radio Ergo's website, particularly as young, educated women and men living in urban areas have smart phones and laptops and like reading.

The consultant recommended further training for Radio Ergo journalists to ensure that they capture gender perspectives throughout their reporting. Also, development of a gender-training manual for use in Somalia to build journalists' knowledge on how to incorporate gender into their coverage and promote gender equality and social inclusion. IMS should plan a comprehensive gender strategy for Radio Ergo to guide strategic thinking and course of action over the next three to four years.

Finally, this study revealed a rather surprising Radio Ergo following among young educated women in two major cities of Somalia. Recognizing that Radio Ergo is serving many disparate groups of people amongst its very wide audience, further focused studies would provide great insights into how different segments of the audience relate to Radio Ergo, what they wish to hear, and how the programmes are having an impact on their lives. Such research will also help to fill the substantial gaps in knowledge about Somali audiences.

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