

**THE UNIVERSITY OF READING**

**Educational and Developmental Radio for Rural Women:  
Understanding Broadcasters and Listeners in a Case Study  
of Eritrea**

**PhD**

**INTERNATIONAL AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT  
DEPARTMENT**

**Mary Myers**

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## **Declaration**

I confirm that this is my own work and the use of all material from other sources has been properly and fully acknowledged.

Signed

Mary Myers

## **Abstract**

Rural African women's disadvantaged position in relation to accessing developmental information and participating in education is well-known. It has been posited that radio broadcasting is potentially a tool which could help overcome some of their disadvantages.

Through an empirical case-study of radio broadcasting in Eritrea, the research examines the extent to which radio is fulfilling this potential educational and developmental role in relation to rural women. The practical and socio-cultural factors influencing the production of educational and developmental programmes by broadcasters are explored as well as the meaning and attraction that such programmes hold for listeners.

For rural women, a model is proposed, based on the research results, which shows the determinants of interest in and uptake of educational and developmental radio. It identifies the obstacles to hearing and understanding the radio, as well as four important factors, namely, the need to feel the relevance of radio content, to like it, to have a sufficiently positive self-image in relation to radio listening, and to believe it.

For broadcasters, a second model is proposed, showing a range of factors which are mostly negatively influencing the production of programmes for rural women in Eritrea. These are related mainly to broadcasters' self-images, their organisational constraints, their working ethos, and the ideological and political factors governing the way broadcasting is planned and structured.

It is argued that these various factors, and the background reasons for them, must be addressed, and/or allowed for, in order to make educational and developmental radio more meaningful for rural women. Some pointers for communication planners are given to this effect, and some suggestions are made for further research about rural broadcasting in Africa, particularly that which is run by state-owned public-service oriented structures.

# Contents

<b>Abstract</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>Acknowledgements</b> .....	<b>11</b>
<b>Glossary and Abbreviations</b> .....	<b>12</b>
<b>Chapter 1: Introduction</b> .....	<b>14</b>
1.1. Focus .....	14
1.2 The Importance of Radio .....	15
1.3. Why rural women? .....	17
1.4. Why Eritrea? .....	18
1.5. The need for this study .....	20
1.6. Gender .....	21
1.7. Theoretical Framework .....	22
1.8. Structure of the Thesis.....	28
<b>Chapter 2: Literature Review</b> .....	<b>30</b>
2.1. Introduction .....	30
2.2. Main Methods and Debates .....	33
2.2.1 Radio for Development.....	33
2.2.2. Radio for Education.....	37
2.2.3 Key debates in the field of educational and developmental radio.....	41
2.3. Previous Literature on Women and Radio and Rural Broadcasting .....	46
2.3.1. Women and Radio.....	46
2.3.2. Literature on Broadcasting for a rural audience.....	56
<b>Chapter 3: Context</b> .....	<b>59</b>
3.1. Introduction .....	59
3.2. Geographical and socio-economic features of present-day Eritrea.....	60
3.3. Outline of recent history of Eritrea.....	61
3.4. Background to the EPLF .....	64
3.5. Status and Roles of Women .....	65
3.5.1. Evolution of women’s status during independence war .....	66
3.5.2. Changes in women’s status since independence.....	68
3.5.3. Women’s roles in rural areas.....	69
3.6. Background on broadcasting .....	72
3.7. Education .....	79
3.7.1. History of education.....	80
3.7.2. The EPLF approach to education.....	81

3.7.3. Education in Eritrea today .....	83
3.7.4. Issues in Education .....	84
3.7.5. Information Provision.....	86
3.8. Conclusion .....	87
<b>Chapter 4: Methodology .....</b>	<b>91</b>
4.1. Introduction .....	91
4.2. Research methods.....	92
4.2.1. Research Questions .....	95
4.2.2. Observation .....	97
4.2.3. Potential problems with participant observation .....	98
4.2.4. Research Assistance.....	101
4.3. Research in case-study villages.....	105
4.3.1. Introduction.....	105
4.3.2. Questionnaire-based survey (survey A) .....	112
4.3.3. Focus Groups.....	116
4.3.4. Information Sources .....	118
4.3.5. Further Discussions with Focus Groups.....	121
4.3.6. Radio-Listening Focus-Groups.....	122
4.3.7. Quantitative Survey (Survey B) .....	125
4.3.8. Survey and interviews done outside Case-Study Villages (survey C) ....	127
4.4. Interviews with Key Informants .....	129
4.5. Consultation of Secondary Sources.....	131
<b>Chapter 5: Rural Women Listeners in Eritrea .....</b>	<b>132</b>
5.1 Introduction .....	132
5.2 Factors Affecting Radio Listening for Rural Communities.....	132
5.2.1 Lack of sets and batteries .....	133
5.2.2. Reception, Scheduling and Languages .....	134
5.2.3.Critical Listening .....	134
5.3. Women's Listening Patterns .....	136
5.3.1. Control of the Radio Set .....	136
5.3.2. Radio Listening patterns within the household .....	137
5.3.3. Sharing of radio sets .....	138
5.3.4 Regularity with which women listen.....	138
5.3.5 When women listen .....	139
5.3.6 How women listen .....	140

5.3.7. How women listen to the Education channel.....	142
5.3.8. Women’s Preferences .....	143
5.4. Factors Affecting Radio Listening for Women .....	144
5.4.1. Circumstances under which women listen to the radio.....	144
5.4.2 Attitudinal factors affecting radio listening .....	147
5.4.3. Issues around comprehension .....	150
5.4.4. Issues related to Relevance .....	153
5.5. The Role of Radio in Women’s Lives .....	154
5.5.1. Entertainment, Information and Education .....	154
5.5.2 Radio as an Information Source .....	155
5.5.3. Radio as a Source of Education .....	166
5.5.4. Issues of Learning, Relevance and Engagement.....	167
5.5.5. Issues related to Attitude and Behaviour Change .....	172
<b>Chapter 6 – Radio Broadcasters in Eritrea.....</b>	<b>177</b>
6.1. Radio Output.....	177
6.1.1. Overall radio output.....	177
6.1.2. Educational output across both channels .....	178
6.1.3. Output aimed at women and girls across both channels .....	182
6.2. Eritrean Broadcasters’ Organisations and Working Teams .....	185
6.2.1. Limited Resources.....	185
6.2.2. Centralised structure .....	187
6.2.3. Embryonic and Undeveloped Structures .....	188
6.2.4. Coordination Issues.....	193
6.3. Broadcasters’ Outlook.....	194
6.3.1. Self-image .....	195
6.3.2. Awareness of the power and potential of radio.....	199
6.3.3. Approaches to Education .....	201
6.3.4. Image of the female audience .....	205
<b>Chapter 7: Understanding Rural Women Listeners.....</b>	<b>208</b>
7.1. Introduction .....	208
7.2. A model for understanding women and radio .....	208
7.2.1. Overview of the model.....	209
7.2.2. Immediate prerequisites for radio listening.....	210
7.2.3. Four important conditions .....	210
7.2.4. Background socio-economic and cultural factors .....	211

7.3. Attention issues.....	212
7.3.1. Attention to radio within the household – the influence of gender norms	212
7.3.2. Problems with Listening Centres .....	215
7.3.3. Domestic work-patterns.....	216
7.3.4. Problems with attention .....	218
7.4. Attitudinal issues .....	219
7.4.1. The ‘need to be educated’ idea .....	219
7.4.2. Issues around gender and self-confidence.....	220
7.4.3. Attitudes towards the radio.....	222
7.5. Uses and Gratifications.....	224
7.5.1. Usability and Relevance of Information .....	224
7.5.2. Difficulties with questioning/feedback.....	225
7.5.3. Women’s radio preferences.....	226
7.6. Radio’s Effects .....	229
<b>Chapter 8: Broadcasting to Rural Women – Discussion and</b>	
<b>Conclusions.....</b>	<b>231</b>
8.1. Introduction .....	231
8.2. Influences on Eritrean broadcasters .....	231
8.2.1. A model showing factors influencing radio production.....	231
8.2.2. Broadcasters’ Self-Image .....	234
8.2.3. Broadcasters’ Working Teams .....	238
8.2.4. Broadcasters’ Social Environment.....	242
8.2.5. Broadcasters and their respective organisations.....	244
8.2.6. Public Character of Broadcasting.....	246
8.3 Conclusions .....	250
8.3.1. Knowledge of female audience .....	253
8.3.2. Attitudes towards female audience.....	256
8.3.3. Appeal of programmes .....	258
8.3.4. Policy Commitment to radio by and for rural women .....	262
<b>Chapter 9: Concluding Comments.....</b>	<b>268</b>
9.1. The contribution of this study .....	268
9.2. Wider application for models.....	269
9.3. Other research possibilities.....	272
9.3.1. Broadcasting Policy .....	272
9.3.2. Women’s day-to-day listening .....	273

9.3.3. Woman-headed-households .....	274
9.3.4. Media Literacy for Rural Women .....	275
9.4. A final pointer for donors .....	276
<b>Appendices .....</b>	<b>277</b>
Appendix 1 .....	277
Radio in Eritrea: Timings and Frequencies (1996) .....	277
Appendix 2 .....	279
An update on Eritrea .....	279
Appendix 3 .....	284
Questionnaires from Methodology Chapter 4 .....	284
Appendix 4 .....	286
Case-study village profiles .....	286
Appendix 5 .....	290
Radio Scripts: .....	290
<b>Bibliography .....</b>	<b>301</b>

## Index of Figures

Fig. 1: Maletzke (1963) Model of the Mass-media .....	24
Fig. 2: Venn Diagram of Research Methods.....	94
Fig. 3: Determinants of Interest in and Uptake of Radio content by Rural Women in Eritrea.....	209
Fig. 4: Characteristics of good advice - from Hubley (1993:52) .....	225
Fig. 5: Factors influencing the production of educational and developmental programmes for rural women in Eritrea (after Maletzke 1963) .....	232

## Index of Tables

Table 1: Characteristics of case-study villages .....	107
Table 2: Radio ownership, by household, in case-study villages.....	133
Table 3: Ability of women to operate the radio – by age group .....	137
Table 4: Responses to the question ‘Who listens to the radio most in your household?’ .....	138
Table 5: Listeners to the EMMP channel, by village.....	139
Table 6: ‘Last programme heard’ and channel it was on.....	141
Table 7: Answers to question: ‘What do you recall from the EMMP programmes’? .....	143

## Map

Map of Eritrea showing Case-Study villages .....	108
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## Index of Bar Charts

<b>1a: Women’s Sources of News (War with Yemen).....</b>	<b>157</b>
<b>1b: Men’s Sources of News (War with Yemen) .....</b>	<b>157</b>
<b>2a: Women’s Sources of Information re. Eritrean Constitution .....</b>	<b>158</b>
<b>2b: Men’s Sources of Information re. Eritrean Constitution.....</b>	<b>158</b>
<b>3a: Women’s Sources of Information re. HIV/AIDS .....</b>	<b>159</b>
<b>3b: Men’s Sources of Information re. HIV/AIDS .....</b>	<b>159</b>
<b>4a: Women’s Sources of Information re. Immunization.....</b>	<b>160</b>
<b>4b: Men’s Sources of Information re. Immunization .....</b>	<b>160</b>
<b>5a: Women’s Sources of Information re. ORS .....</b>	<b>161</b>
<b>5b: Men’s Sources of Information re. ORS.....</b>	<b>161</b>
<b>6a: Women’s Sources of Information re. Contraception.....</b>	<b>163</b>
<b>6b: Men’s Sources of Information re. Contraception .....</b>	<b>163</b>
<b>7a: Women’s Sources of Information re. Chickens .....</b>	<b>164</b>
<b>7b: Men’s Sources of Information re. Chickens .....</b>	<b>164</b>

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# Glossary and Abbreviations

## Terminology relating to Eritrea

There are various terms commonly used in Eritrea relating to the independence war against Ethiopia (1961-91) such as 'liberation', 'martyr' or 'the freedom struggle' that are used in this study, but which are not intended to imply a value so attached; they are simply used because they reflect common parlance.

The term 'liberation' refers to the end of the war (1991) and 'independence' refers to the formal declaration of Eritrea as an independent state, following a referendum in 1993.

The term 'fighter' denotes anyone who was a member of the Eritrean armed forces during the independence war, whether in active service or in a supporting role.

There are no standardised rules regarding the transcription of Tigrinia or other Eritrean languages, so some of the phonetic spellings used, (such as for the word 'Tigrinia' itself) may appear differently here than in other studies.

<i>Baito</i>	Village-level assembly
<i>Injera</i>	Local staple food made from te'ef (a grass-like crop particular to highland Ethiopia and Eritrea)

## Acronyms

ABE	Adult Basic Education
AM/MW	Medium Wave
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
CBO	Community Based Organisation
CIERRO	Inter-African rural radio training centre, Ouagadougou
COL	Commonwealth of Learning
CR	Community radio
DFID	Department for International Development (UK Government)
DH	<i>Dimtsi Haffash</i> (The Voice of the Broad Masses)
DTR	Development Through Radio

ELF	Eritrean Liberation Front
EMMP	Educational Mass Media Programme
EPLF	Eritrean People's Liberation Front
ERA	Eritrean Relief Association
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation of the UN
FGC	Female Genital Cutting
FGM	Female Genital Mutilation
FM	Frequency Modulation
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GoE	Government of Eritrea
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IEC	Information Education and Communication
IRI	Interactive Radio Instruction
IRIN	Integrated Regional Information Networks
KBC	Kenya Broadcasting Corporation
KH	Kilohertz
kW	Kilowatt
MBC	Malawian Broadcasting Corporation
MM	Mary Myers
MoE	Ministry of Education
MoH	Ministry of Health
MoI	Ministry of Information
MRG	Minority Rights Group
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
NUEW	National Union of Eritrean Women
NUEY	National Union of Eritrean Youth
OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN)
ODI	Overseas Development Institute
ORS	Oral Rehydration Solution
PFDJ	People's Front for Democracy and Justice
SIDA	Swedish International Aid
SW	Short Wave
TPLF	Tigrayan People's Liberation Front
UNDP	UN Development Programme
UNESCO	UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNICEF	United Nation's Childrens Fund
WHO	World Health Organisation
ZBC	Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation

# Chapter 1: Introduction

## 1.1. Focus

This thesis is an exploration of educational and developmental radio broadcasting for rural women in developing countries. It takes Eritrea as a case-study to draw out wider lessons for other countries in Africa.

The main research question is: What factors need to be considered in order for radio broadcasting to offer meaningful educational and developmental programmes for rural women, and what lessons can be drawn from a case-study of Eritrea?

The research is based on fieldwork in Eritrea in 1995/96 where a qualitative empirical study was carried out of both rural women consumers at village level and of radio producers at central level in Eritrea's capital, Asmara. To this end, a model of the mass communication process by Maletzke (1963) provides the theoretical starting-point which is then adapted.

The type of radio broadcasting that is the focus of the study is general educational and developmental programming aimed at rural adults; what Bates (1984) calls 'open broadcasting'. Distance learning in any formal sense is *not* the focus, except in the discussion of efforts by the Eritrean Ministry of Education (MoE) to link the Educational Mass Media Programmes (EMMP) to Listening Centres. In this case, the discussion will venture somewhat into the realm of non-formal education through radio. But on the whole, neither the area of formalised interactive radio instruction (IRI), nor the use of radio to teach specific skills at a distance are being explored in Eritrea, nor are they in this thesis. The focus is primarily on the producers and consumers of programmes which are consciously, or unconsciously, conceived to be 'educational' or 'developmental' by their producers (e.g. programmes on such topics as health, agriculture, income generation, rights, civic responsibilities, gender issues etc.), but for which the consumers are mostly casual listeners rather than 'students' or 'learners' who are organised in any way.

## 1.2 The Importance of Radio

In a country like Eritrea radio is important because it is almost the only information source that rural people can access, beyond their immediate word-of-mouth networks. Other mass-media (such as television or newspapers) are extremely rare, roads are poor (where they exist at all), electrification is almost non-existent in rural areas, and distances between settlements are great. Furthermore, literacy rates are strikingly low, at around only 10 percent for women and 20 percent for men (UNICEF, 1994). The position of radio, with its ability to reach the remotest areas, is therefore a pre-eminent one. Radio's popularity is also due to its relative affordability in terms of unit and production costs, its portability, and to the fact that it can be used and enjoyed by non-literate people. Various commentators have noted radio's superiority over television in its ability to evoke 'better pictures' and to set the imagination free (Harris, 1999). W. H. Auden once said that radio is an art-form which is 'not spoiled by any collision with visual reality' (quoted in Watson & Hill, 1993).

### *Advantages*

In developing countries radio has advantages over other information and communication technologies (ICTs) in terms of coverage and of cost (UNDP, 2001; UNESCO, 2000). It also has advantages over other types of mass-media such as newspapers and leaflets, posters or booklets, for reasons of illiteracy and difficulties related to distribution of print media. In comparison with live media such as theatre, radio wins on cost-per-head comparisons (Norrish, Lloyd-Morgan, & Myers, 2001:10). Radio is still being used as the medium of choice to reach rural people *en masse* by governments, development agencies, and local NGOs and civil society groups. Probably radio's only major competitor, in terms of reaching rural people with developmental and educational information, is face-to-face communication in the form of extension, training, or public meetings.

Although it is now generally acknowledged that radio (or any single medium) cannot effect developmental change on its own (Fraser & Restrepo-Estrada, 1998; Waisbord, 2003), and can only rarely be a substitute for face-to-face teaching or

interpersonal communication (Perraton, 2000), it has been used since the latter years of the colonial era for distance education and in the form both of open-learning and specific out-of-school teaching and training for adults and children alike. Particularly in developing countries, radio has been seen as a means to reach those who have missed out on conventional school-based education, to supplement often over-stretched conventional educational structures, and of particular use with non-literates, in areas of difficult terrain and otherwise underdeveloped infrastructure. It has also been, and continues to be, used as either the main vehicle or a component in all types of 'pro-social' (Harris, 1999) awareness and behaviour change campaigns (from family planning and food-production to public safety); as a means to build democracy and nation-hood; and also as a means to strengthen community and foster horizontal discussion of change and development.

Despite its post-war decline in industrialised countries in the face of television, radio has had something of a renaissance in developing countries, particularly Africa, over the last two decades (see for e.g. Deane et. al., 2002; Fardon & Furniss, 2000; Girard, 1992, 2003; Panos, 2004). This is due to the physical and cost advantages just described, and to the spread of cheap transistors, the inability of television to compete due to high unit costs and lack of rural electrification, the opening-up of the airwaves in many countries, and to the fact that international donors, civil society, the private sector, NGOs and governments have invested in radio afresh. This new investment is partly attributable to the fact that radio seems to have proved itself as a developmental tool, particularly with the resurgence of community and local radio, which have facilitated a far more participatory and horizontal type of communication than seemed to be possible with the older, centralised broadcasting model of the 1960s and 70s (see for e.g. Dagrón, 2001). There seems also to have been a re-discovery of radio in the context of new ICTs, and a realisation that radio can help 'bridge the so called digital divide' by providing a powerful tool for information dissemination and access, especially by 'hard-to-reach rural audiences' (Girard, 2004).

### *Disadvantages*

However, ever since its invention, the potential of radio as a positive developmental force has been debated. Brecht famously sang its praises but questioned whether

radio would ever fulfil its potential as a communication tool because of its inherent one-way nature, (see Silberman, 2000). The debate about just how efficacious radio is as a tool for human development has continued ever since. Briefly, radio's disadvantages centre around the medium's ephemeral nature, the difficulties inherent in making it a two-way medium, its sometimes significant running costs (both for the listener and for the broadcaster) and the fact that it rarely seems to be effective on its own, without the support of other media or human back-up.

Its use in the context of distance education is problematic in that it cannot teach skills which require visual demonstration and it cannot easily elicit feedback or answer questions or make immediate clarifications. Neither can it monitor the needs and progress of individual learners. Some ways around these problems have been attempted and these are discussed in Chapter 2, but radio has rarely been used effectively as a teaching tool on its own.

Radio's other problems in relation to development in Africa are its association with propagandist and untrusted governments (Roth, 2001), as well as with, at times, irresponsible and sensationalist journalism and/or a propensity, especially when privatised, to cater to the tastes and commercial interests of the aspirant urban classes, rather than to the rural poor (Deane et al., 2002; Okigbo, 1996).

### **1.3. Why rural women?**

The reason for the focus on rural women is that they are the single largest sector which remains unacknowledged and unsupported in terms of their contribution to and their participation in the development process (Heyzer, Kapoor, & Sandler, 1995; Mosse, 1993). This has been documented by, for example, United Nations (1996), and, earlier argued by the likes of Boserup (1970) and Rogers (1980). In almost all indicators of human development, be it economic, education, health or rights-related, women are disadvantaged compared with men (see for e.g. DFID, 2000; UNDP, 2001).

It is persuasively argued (by the World Bank, among others) that there is a statistical correlation between mothers' levels of education and the health of their children,

suggesting that the more women are educated, the greater the social benefits (Wisner, 1989). By facilitating women's access to information, knowledge and skills and, indeed, the means to communicate and to participate in knowledge generation and community development itself, many developmental problems may be solved or more easily tackled because of women's influence at household level and their pivotal role in agriculture and education of the next generation (see for e.g. Balit, 1999; King & Hill, 1993; Riano, 1994).

Thus the question arises of how to reach women with, and involve them in, the process of education and development, and how to overcome their constraints of time, space, resources and socio-economic disabilities (Trivedi, 1989). To this end, radio seems to have certain advantages over other communication channels, by virtue of it being a household medium (women's isolation in the home being overcome by radio's reach), by virtue of its relative affordability and portability, by virtue of its potential to reach women and girls at all stages of their life and in any location in order to substitute for the formal education they have often missed out on, by the fact that it does not require literacy, and finally by its attractiveness as a medium for entertainment, pleasure and social focus (Balit, 1999; Foadey, 2004; Ilboudo, 2004; Lacey, 2004; Trivedi, 1989).

However, whilst claims may be made as to the power of radio to reach them, to inform them and to educate them, very few studies have looked in depth at women listeners in rural areas and tried to find out what, and how much *meaning* radio actually has for them, what barriers stand in the way of women gaining more educational and development value from radio, and what programmes, contents and formats work from their points of view.

#### **1.4. Why Eritrea?**

Eritrea was chosen as a case study on the premise that it would offer certain typical characteristics from which lessons for other developing countries could reasonably be taken. Moreover, Eritrea has certain unique characteristics, which make it a

particularly rich setting in which to look at women and radio. Although some of the newer developments in African broadcasting (such as liberalisation or pluralism of the airwaves) do not apply to Eritrea, the reach and influence of radio in this small war-torn country are still significant. Broadcasting on two channels, in all nine of Eritrea's languages, and with radio listenership estimated at 60%<sup>1</sup>, the radio is part of the daily reality of the majority of the Eritrean population. Given all of the preceding advantages, the *prima facie* case for radio as an educational and developmental tool in a country like Eritrea is strong.

Eritrea is in many ways typical of other developing countries; thus lessons can logically be drawn and applied from here to elsewhere. Firstly, in terms of its centralised broadcasting structures it is similar to other countries in Africa where the main national broadcaster is state-controlled, and which produce and broadcast radio (and television) from a capital city government department (typically, the ministry of information), usually using Medium Wave. Secondly, Eritrea has a diverse multi-language, multi-ethnic, and multi-religious population, which is again, typical of almost all countries in Africa. This obviously presents particular challenges for broadcasting, particularly for a government-based national provider, in terms of maintenance and fostering of national unity and the need to cater for minorities.

Eritrea has a difficult physical geography in that a large proportion of it is dry and mountainous, with a highly dispersed rural population (many of whom - 38 percent - are semi or fully nomadic (Woldemichael, 1992)) who are hard to reach in terms of services and who in turn lack markets and opportunities to move about easily, and are thus physically isolated from the cultural and commercial centres.

The status of women and girls in Eritrea is also typical of many developing countries in that they make up the majority of the population and the (largely unpaid) workforce, but have low status and low educational levels compared with men and boys (UNICEF, 1994). They face many of the obstacles familiar to other African women including limited human rights, culturally-determined restrictions on their movements and risks to their health, fewer educational opportunities, high workloads, and lesser involvement in public life at all levels (see Chapter 3).

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<sup>1</sup> This includes those listening in common, not just individual owners

Nevertheless, Eritrea of course has its own unique history and culture, and, although it is in many ways a difficult country in which to carry out research, it is interesting for its history of women's liberation, commitment to popular education at the grassroots, and historical commitment to radio. During its thirty year 'liberation struggle' against Ethiopia (1961-1991) the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF), which is now effectively the government (GoE), became famous for its work in popular education among the rural masses and is still committed to a policy of mass education for adults which prioritises women, through various non-formal means, including radio.

### **1.5. The need for this study**

Academic studies about radio in Africa are surprisingly scarce, given the medium's ubiquity and influence (Fardon & Furniss, 2000:8; Tomaselli, 1996:xiv). The literature on rural women and radio is even more so. Several generalized claims are made in the development communications and education literature as to the power of radio to reach rural women (see above). But little is written about how this can actually be implemented and what conditions need to prevail in order for women to have genuine access to and interest in educational and developmental radio. This study looks at the reality on the ground in a country which, it is argued, is in many ways typical of Africa.

Eritrean broadcasters themselves seem to have a rather generalised and stereotypical view of their women listeners. During field-work it was striking how broadcasters assumed what rural women's interests and information needs were. There was a lack of field-based research in rural Eritrea either about women's prior knowledge of the broadcast topics which were chosen on their behalf, or about their listening patterns and preferences in terms of subject-matter, formats and so on. Certain assumptions were being made which needed to be investigated more deeply. Certain subjects – for example those relating to strategic gender needs – were being avoided or left vague. This study is a contribution to an analysis of rural women's roles and interests in Eritrea.

More importantly, this study is one of the few in-depth studies of educational/developmental radio which takes a gender perspective anywhere in the developing world. As is shown in the review of the literature (Chapter 2), most academic work on women and radio is based on research in industrialised countries and does not inform our understanding of how women respond to radio in a developing-world context. Moreover, such research tends to take a reception-studies approach and/or to focus on representations of women in the media. By contrast this study looks at the whole broadcasting setting within which content for women is selected and structured. Furthermore, it goes some way to answer a need - as articulated via the UN - to inform broadcasting policy:

‘There is a need for new research that moves beyond...descriptive assessments of the portrayal of women. In future, studies need to relate the issues such as problematic portrayals of gender to national media policy in a way that provides for recommendations for feasible policy amendment.’ (Gill, 2002)

And it also helps to fill a lacuna in the distance education literature as identified by Edirisingha (1999b:2):

‘we are short of information about the effectiveness of, and the critical conditions necessary for successful implementation of open and distance learning for basic education, particularly in developing countries.’

## **1.6. Gender**

Before outlining the wider theoretical framework for this study, an explanation and a justification must be given for the way a gender perspective is approached. A useful definition of gender is the following: ‘The socially constructed roles ascribed to males and females [which are] learned, change over time, and vary widely within and across cultures. Whereas biological sex identity is determined by reference to genetic and anatomical characteristics, socially learned gender is an acquired identity’ (Oneworld, 2004).

The study draws on a framework developed by Moser (1993), that divides women's roles into the productive, the reproductive and the community-management spheres. These refer respectively to work done for payment in cash or kind; those which reproduce the family and labour-force (i.e. bearing and bringing up children, and all household domestic tasks); and those roles which pertain to community-organisation or leadership such as (largely unpaid) support for social, political and religious groupings, cultural events, non-formal education initiatives, and communal work at the local level.

Moser's categories give a conceptual framework for analysing how radio may or may not fit into rural women's three-fold roles in life. Moser's work also helps the present study situate the educational and developmental impact of radio in terms of either women's practical needs - namely, the needs identified to help women in their existing socially accepted roles in society; or their strategic gender needs - namely, the needs identified to transform existing subordinate relationships between men and women, which may include such issues as legal rights, domestic violence, equal wages, and women's control over their bodies (UNDP, 1995).

Although reference is made to strategic gender needs, this study did not set out explicitly to take a feminist stance, nor to probe rural Eritrean women's perspectives on their position *vis à vis* men in society, or in relation to their rights. Neither does it dwell on related branches of feminist media analysis such as the portrayal of women in the media, the media's effects on women's consciousness, or on issues around the reinforcement or maintenance of gender stereotypes in society by radio – interesting those these research topics would be. Rather, it foregrounds women listeners' own perspectives and explores strategic gender issues as raised by either broadcasters or the audience.

## **1.7. Theoretical Framework**

This study is interdisciplinary in that it draws not only on work from the realm of development and gender studies, but on adult and distance education and on media studies. It was born out of a desire to understand the impact of educational and

developmental radio programmes produced by Eritrean radio; the personal story of which is as follows:

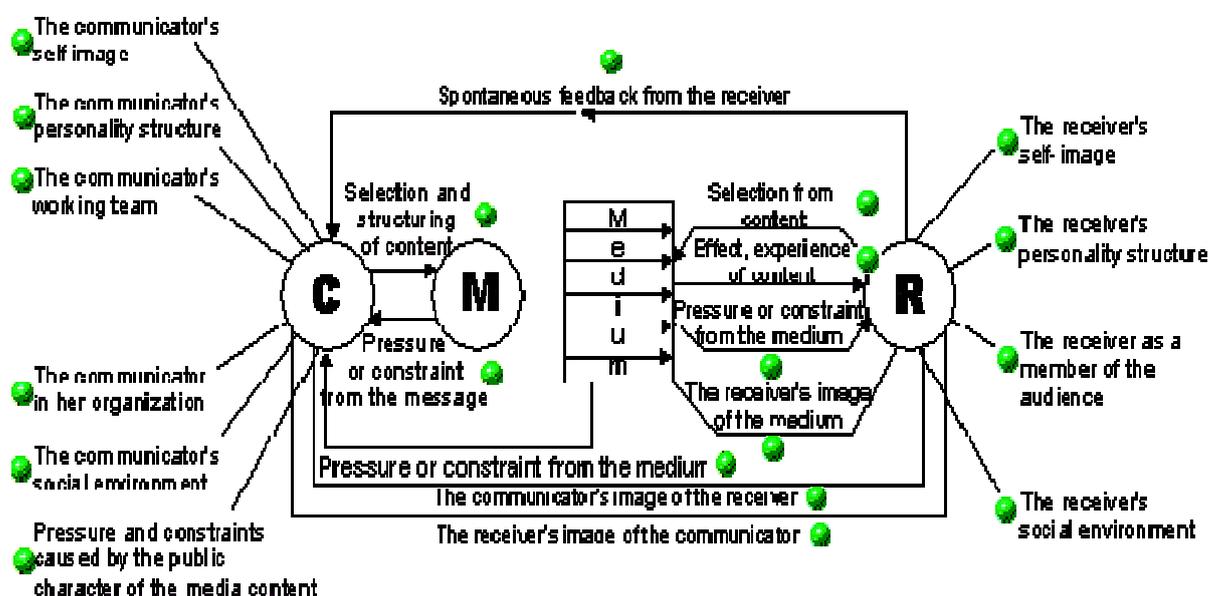
In 1995 to 1996 I was working in Asmara with Eritrean broadcasters to produce campaigns on environmental and health issues. I felt it necessary to help them and myself to a more in-depth comprehension of the audience – particularly the relatively invisible female audience - than was possible through the methods which were available at the time, ie. occasional listeners' letters, patchy anecdotal evidence, incomplete and non-gender-disaggregated surveys. My conviction at the time, generated from my previous work in participatory development projects elsewhere in Africa, and from writers like Mody (1991), was that in order to have 'impact' on a given 'target', one had to start *with the audience* and research their knowledge, attitudes and practice on a given subject as a first step. So this research began as a needs-assessment study of the intended audience and my first move was to go out into the field, sit down with village women, and ask them about their radio listening. In tandem, I started thinking about the people on whose behalf I was doing this field-work; the *other* side of the communication equation, namely the broadcasters themselves. I realised, the perhaps self-evident fact, that one cannot expect educational and development radio to have an impact, or to have meaning for the audience, without understanding the way messages are selected and constructed by senders. It also seemed important to deconstruct the ideas the broadcasters themselves had about their right to deliver messages about social, cultural and behaviour change, and about where those messages came from in the first place. For this, I went to media studies, and looked for models which factored-in both sides of the communication equation.

### *A Starting Point*

The research starts, therefore, from a need to find a framework that enables a view to be taken of the two sides of the broadcasting process. Maletzke's (1963) model (see Fig. 1 below) provides such a starting point. It takes both media makers and media consumers, and looks at both sides of the communication equation to model the process of communication of messages via a mass-medium such as radio. The advantage of this model is that it is a comprehensive picture of the whole mass-

communication process, embedded in its social psychological context (McQuail & Windahl, 1981). In terms of structure, this mirrors what this thesis sets out to do, namely, to build up a comprehensive picture of the practice of and the influences behind the broadcasting process, and to explore as many of the dependent variables as possible in the process of producing and consuming educational and developmental radio (for women), in order to better understand - and possibly improve - the whole system.

**Fig. 1: Maletzke (1963) Model of the Mass-media**



Maletzke presents the mass-communication process as a circular, rather than a linear model, with the communicator, the receiver *and* the medium all influencing each other and the message. His model does not assume a direct transmission of message from an active sender to a passive receiver but, instead, clearly shows how the formulation, reception and (any) meaning or effects of a media message are contingent on a great number of factors influencing both communicators and receivers. As Watson and Hall (1993:107) put it:

'Maletzke's is a model suggesting that in the communication process many shoulders are being looked over: the more shoulders, the more compromises, the more adjustments.'

It clearly shows how the communicator is a 'gatekeeper' (White, 1950) of knowledge and information and that he or she selects or rejects content on the basis of criteria determined by his or her class or social background, working environment, education and upbringing. It also shows that the receiver is an active selector of that content, and that she or he too is part of a 'larger context of reception' (Watson & Hill, 1993), meaning that he or she is subject to influences other than media messages, and these may come from the family, those in whose company s/he reads/watches/listens, and from the wider social environment.

As such it differs fundamentally from the linear 'media effects' model, (basically 'Who says what to whom with what effect?' (Lasswell, 1948)), which assumes an essentially passive and vulnerable audience (Melkote, 1991; Windahl, Signitzer, & Olson, 1992). Lasswell's model is partly a holdover from the early days of propaganda, but is one that much of communication theory – including development communications - has adhered to in one form or another since it was first proposed in the 1940s (Chin, 2000; Fraser & Restrepo-Estrada, 1998; Melkote, 1991). Maletzke couches the outside factors that influence communicators and receivers in social terms and in psychological terms. He makes space for attitudes towards the medium, and constraints of the medium for both sides. He also factors in the communicator's image of the receiver and vice versa.

This is the model used to begin analysing both the hitherto neglected and stereotyped female audience and the media-maker and his/her influences, ideology and working environment, in order to discern fertile entry points which might improve meaning, impact and effectiveness, for all concerned.

#### *Adaptations to Maletzke's model*

However, there is a need for Maletzke's (1963) model to be updated and adapted to the situation in question. Probably its most obvious limitation is that it seems to assume a democratic context for mass-communication, rather than, say an authoritarian one. As such, it does not explicitly take political/ideological influences into account, and thereby perhaps assumes too much freedom on the part of the communicator. Moreover, it seems to assume a greater variety of output, and

freedom of choice on the part of the audience than is the case in countries like Eritrea. If it were to reflect the Eritrean situation, where media control is somewhat authoritarian, and where choice is limited, an acknowledgement of the pressure from central government on communicators and messages needs to be included.

Another shortcoming of the Maletzke model is that it does not explicitly cater for a gender perspective. However, as with notions around ideology, it is possible to layer gender considerations over Maletzke's basic model. In so doing stimulus is drawn from work by the likes of Hobson (1980), Morley (1986) and Moores (1993), who, in their studies of media consumption at the household level have variously analysed how men and women access, consume and respond to media in different ways, and have pointed out that patriarchal values significantly influence the whole construction and reception of mass-media.

The psychological aspect of Maletzke's model is another one which needs some adjustment. This study does not explore psychology in anything other than a superficial way, since it is looking at broadcasters and women listeners from a social science perspective. Furthermore, it does not deal with individuals, but with broadcasters and listeners as groups. Therefore, for the purposes of this study the psychological character of the individual communicator or receiver will not be explored, so one of Maletzke's categories - that dealing with 'the communicator's/receiver's personality structure' - will largely be ignored, except insofar as aspects of a personality may apply to the groups in question.

### *Theory behind the analysis*

Turning now to the theoretical underpinnings to the analysis of findings, other writers within the discipline of mass-communication research are also of influence: notably reception and audience studies, particularly those writers like Skuse (1999), Spitulnik (2000) and Tacchi (2000) who adopt an ethnographic approach to the study of radio. But participatory approaches to education, communication and development provide the main insights, and Freire (1970,1973) is a particular influence on the thinking behind the discussion. Freire's work profoundly influenced development thinking from the early 1970s onwards, and was a watershed in the way education and

communication were viewed. Freire showed how education and communication should be reconciled by criticising both of them, in the development context. He said that they had been reduced to 'acts of depositing' (Freire 1973:45) in which the educatees were the depositories and the teacher was the broadcaster of 'communiqués' which the recipients, in a rather mechanical manner, absorbed, digested, memorized and repeated. Freire asserted that the ultimate task of education should not be to encourage the passive assimilation of knowledge but should 'enable men (sic) to discuss courageously the problems of their context – and [should enable them] to intervene in that context' (1973:33). The ultimate aims should be 'conscientisation' and 'liberation' (from a colonial and dependency culture). The means to this end should be problem-posing educational methods (literacy-learning in rural Brazil, in Freire's case) which should be based on dialogue; for 'without dialogue there is no communication, and without communication there can be no true education' (1973:65).

Many of the principles in Freire's writing are the ideal to which educational and developmental communications might eventually aspire and his work informs a great deal of those who have since written about how development communications can be a participatory process (e.g. Dagnon, 2001; Fuglesang, 1982; Mody, 1991; White, Nair, & Ascroft, 1994). Such writers and practitioners argue for the necessity of putting local culture and communities and their sense-making practices at the centre of the analysis, and to start from a perspective of *respect* for the audience, which, as will be shown is often lacking among broadcasters in Eritrea.

### *Basis for conclusions*

Consequently, having used Maletzke's (1963) model, and brought-in other theorists to analyse the picture of the communication situation between Eritrean broadcasters and women listeners, this study moves on to examine how it might be possible to improve the existing picture. The basis for the conclusions is a conception of how state-broadcasting might be made more participatory, for the benefit of women listeners. It assumes there is an intimate link between education and information on the one hand and human development on the other, but only when education and

information are given and exchanged in a spirit of dialogue and with the aim of empowerment of the recipient.

In Eritrea, at present, the media landscape is in almost diametrical opposition to the Freirian ideal of empowerment through education and equal partnership between receivers/learners and communicators/teachers. This is because the Eritrean media is still big, state-controlled and top-down, whereas it is usually the small, localised, horizontal, community-owned media which are most conducive to participatory methodologies in communication. But, although Freirian principles are idealistic, they are not utopian in the sense of being unobtainable. Some of them provide the broad framework for the conclusions of this thesis.

## **1.8. Structure of the Thesis**

This thesis is composed of nine chapters, including this one. Chapter 2 looks at the literature and current practice in educational and developmental radio. It shows how the study relates to others' and shows shortcomings in the literature that this study attempts to address.

Chapter 3 sets the research in the context of contemporary Eritrea. It charts the country's recent history, the background to the present broadcasting situation, the status and multiple roles of rural women and the situation pertaining to education. It highlights factors that are key to understanding broadcasting in Eritrea, namely the thirty-year 'liberation war' and the main tensions in contemporary Eritrean society. (It should be noted that 'contemporary' for the purposes of this study was the situation prevailing at the time of field-work in 1995/96. An update about developments in Eritrea post 1996 is given in the Appendix, although, as will be argued, not a great deal changed as far as women's situation, or broadcasting are concerned between 1996 and 2004).

Chapter 4 justifies and describes the methodology for the field-work in Eritrea, which was designed as a case-study using a multi-method approach to data-gathering. This included various qualitative and quantitative tools and some experimental work. The bulk of the field work was carried out over six months in rural areas, and as a

participant observer among broadcasters in Asmara, whilst the researcher was in Eritrea for the purpose of training broadcasters under an EU grant.

Chapter 5 presents the first part of the research results, by starting from the right hand side of the Maletzke (1963) model and looking at rural radio listeners in Eritrea, bringing out the various ways interest in and uptake of educational and developmental radio is influenced and determined.

Chapter 6 presents the second part of the findings: those pertaining to radio output and the situation of Eritrean broadcasters. Taking the left-hand side of the Maletzke model as a starting point, this chapter looks at the various influences, pressures and constraints which help determine format and content.

Chapter 7 moves on to a discussion of findings about the audience. Here a conceptual model is presented which is a variation on the receiver-side of Maletzke's model. It is used to determine and discuss the key factors governing rural women's interest in and uptake of radio content.

In Chapter 8 an expanded and adapted version of the Maletzke model is used as a basis for an analysis of the broadcasters' side of the equation. Viewed together with the previous model, it serves to answer the original research question and then leads to a set of pointers for communication planners for Eritrea and elsewhere in Africa.

The final Chapter 9 draws the thesis together, argues for the possibility for a wider application for these conceptual models, and looks forward to further potential research areas.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

### 2.1. Introduction

This chapter shows how the present study relates to others' and provides a background to and a justification of the research undertaken. The use of radio in education and development is an evolving area of work, which has been led less by theorists and more by practitioners experimenting in the field and combining different techniques to find out 'what works'. Consequently, this review of the literature is mainly a review of methodological approaches, with a certain amount of reference to the thinking that has accompanied them.

There are different ways to do a typology of the ways radio can be used in developing countries. For example, Jamison and McAnany (1978), who did one of the most comprehensive reviews of the field, divide the purposes of radio for development communications into four broad categories: to motivate, to inform, to teach and to change behaviour, whilst they also have a separate category for radio for formal education. On the other hand, De Fossard (1997), a practitioner and advocate for educative radio dramas of long experience, defines just two broad categories for radio for social development: non-technical programmes and technical knowledge programmes. The former is for a general audience in order to explain, motivate, encourage and so forth; the latter is for a chosen audience, in order to teach specific skills and new practices.

The difficulty in doing a typology lies in the fact that in the context of communication in developing countries, education and development can be hard to tease apart. For instance, Dodds (1996:2) asks the rhetorical question:

'At what point does an open broadcast development information programme with no organised or structured discussion or study by its audience become an organised educational (even a non-formal educational) activity?'

If learning can take place in response to a radio programme about agriculture, health, business development, and so on, then education must in many ways be part of the process of developmental broadcasting. Conversely, if acquiring skills, being made aware of an issue and being enabled to apply knowledge and information for the improvement of life and livelihoods is at least part of the purpose of following an educational radio programme, then developmental aims must play a large role in the process of educational broadcasting.

This study opts for making a selection similar to de Fossard's, by separating radio-in-development from radio-for-education, whilst acknowledging that there are educative elements in the former, and developmental elements in the latter. The distinction made, follows Coombs, Prosser and Ahmed (1973), whose classic definitions of education into three types is summarised by Carron and Carr-Hill as follows:

‘ *formal education*... (is) the institutionalised, chronologically graded and hierarchically structured education system, running from lower primary school to the upper reaches of the university, generally full time and sanctioned by the state; *non-formal education*...(comprises) all educational activities organised outside the formal system and designed to serve identifiable clientele and educational objectives... with all remaining educational activities being categorised as *informal education* ... (is) the lifelong process by which every person acquires and accumulates knowledge, skills, attitudes and insights from daily experience and exposure to the environment...’ (1991: 5-6)

The distinction drawn herein is between radio broadcasting for development which involves education in an *informal* sense (consisting of information, news, debate, opinion, advocacy, persuasion, and entertainment) all aimed at a mixed audience; and broadcasting for education which involves a more intentionally pedagogical approach and can be classed as education in the *non-formal* sense, serving an identifiable target audience or groups of learners. Put another way, the distinction is between *educative* radio and *educational* radio, as outlined as follows by Waniewicz (1972):

‘educative...programmes have definite enlightening values...to broaden horizons, deepen understanding and sensitivity, refine tastes and so

on...however educational broadcasting's prime objectives are to provide education, in the sense of a given, *purposefully chosen body of knowledge or skills*, transmitted systematically according to an established, pre-planned outline.' (Waniewicz, 1972:52-53)

The distinction between the two can be seen in practice in Eritrea. On the one hand *Dimtsi Haffash* (the main radio channel) has an *informal* approach to education, seeing itself as fulfilling its *educative* remit via its feature-programmes, which are designed to be generally 'enlightening' for the casual listener, but are not structured in a pedagogical sense. On the other hand, the EMMP has a *non-formal* approach to education, seeing its mission as providing *educational* content for adults via its structured series of on-air talks, and is built around the premise that the audience is listening in organised listening groups or literacy classes.

This review is organised to show what the main methods and debates have been, firstly in developmental radio, then in educational radio. It then looks at previous work on the two foci of direct concern, namely rural women and their consumption and reception of radio; and broadcasters and their production of radio content for rural audiences.

However, before beginning, a qualification needs to be made regarding the timing of this review in relation to the fieldwork. The fieldwork for this study was done in 1995/96 and there has been a significant increase in donor interest, more research in radio, and a rapidly expanding body of literature about development communications since that time. This means that some of the gaps in the literature that existed in the early 1990's have now been partially filled. Also, some of the literature referred to in this chapter was not available to the researcher at the time the study was designed, so it did not inform the field-work, but it did inform the final analysis and conclusions. This qualification notwithstanding, this review confirms that nothing comparable to this research has been done elsewhere, to date, and that there is still a need, to which this study contributes, better to understand the role of radio *vis à vis* the education and development of rural women in developing countries.

## 2.2. Main Methods and Debates

### 2.2.1 Radio for Development

#### ~~Intro to Section 2~~

The aim of this section is to give a brief overview of the main approaches and schools of thought in radio for development in non-industrialised countries. Broadly speaking, it can be viewed as a continuum from message-sending approaches at one end, to radio-for-self-expression at the other. Between these two extremes, there are various approaches which mix the two, or tend more to the one than the other. By message-sending approaches is meant structures, projects or styles of radio that exist primarily to disseminate messages leading, ideally, to behaviour change. By radio-for-self-expression is meant structures and styles of broadcasting which see radio as a radical means of expressing a group identity and/or of building alternative physical or ideological communities.

#### 2.2.1.i. Message-sending radio

The approaches taken by many of the early projects in developmental radio were message-centred and top-down, and as such conformed to what has become known as development's modernisation or 'dominant paradigm' (as articulated notably by Lerner, 1955; Schramm, 1964)<sup>2</sup>. Recently the top-down and the modernisation impetus has been tempered, but these ways of doing developmental radio have endured, with certain modifications, to this day, and are not consigned to the past. In fact, as shall be argued, broadcasting in Eritrea today takes its lead from this family of practice in many respects. It is built on visions of development which can be about 'diffusion of innovations' (Rogers, 1962); about the need for individual behaviour change away from traditional beliefs and ways of life; and/or about change-agents (experts, government departments, NGOs, charitable organisations etc.) persuading or encouraging individuals or groups towards social/political/behavioural goals. The goal can be anything from adoption of certain innovations, such as family-planning,

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<sup>2</sup> For an overview of such trends, see Melkote (1991).

and the take-up of fertilizer, to a more general aim of creation of interest in, awareness of or involvement in such things as voting, women's rights, or socialism. It is often, though not necessarily, accompanied by ideas about the inherent ('magic bullet') power of the media (deFleur & Ball-Rokeach, 1989), and the notion of a causal link between mass media exposure and modern attitudes and behaviour (Inkeles, 1974). A quote from Theroux, an advisor to UNESCO in 1978 sums up this vision:

'A country is not likely to develop until its people can visualize a better future and are prepared to work for it...Radio...can raise the aspirations of developing people...It is a liberating force as it wrenches people from the bond of isolation and distance, transporting them from a traditional society and providing them with a capacity to conceive of situations and ways of life quite different...'(Theroux, 1978:9)

Though sometimes heavy-handed, the style of this kind of broadcasting can be subtle and entertaining; informed as it variously is by principles of Aristotelian rhetoric (Orren, 2003), 'edutainment' (Nariman, 1993; Singhal & Rogers, 1999) or by advertising (Manoff, 1985).

One of the most prevalent manifestations of message-sending radio has been state-centred broadcasting, or radio in the service of statism in post-colonial countries, which has basically viewed radio as a tool for consolidating governments in power, building 'nation-hood' (Katz & Wedell, 1977), and promoting the new cultural and socio-economic values thought necessary for market-oriented development (see for e.g. Mwakawago, 1986).

Another, ever-popular strand of message-based radio has been what may be termed extension-type broadcasting. This often uses a campaign approach and invariably couples radio with other media to disseminate messages originated by government ministries (or specialist Information, Communication and Education (IEC) units therein), NGOs and CBOs for a whole range of social and developmental goals<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> For early examples see Spain et.al. 1977; reports of many recent examples are on the Communication Initiative website ([www.comminit.com](http://www.comminit.com)).

### 2.2.1.ii. Radio-for-self-expression

At the other end of the radio-for-development continuum is the type of broadcasting initiated by communities (of interest) as a means of self-expression and a means to define, build, and renew themselves. It is often based on a vision of a radical challenge to the status quo, based on political, ethnic, ideological or religious lines, and on a vision of development as emancipation and self-help (Downing, 1984). Influences include various strands of Marxism, Frierian visions of 'liberation' through 'conscientisation', as well as Christian liberation theology and/or feminism. Examples include radical radio such as that of the Bolivian miners in the 1950s (see Dagron 2001:43-48), opposition radio (for example Sandanista radio, EPLF radio in Eritrea) (Soley, 1987), some of the more genuinely autonomous community and pirate stations now emerging in Africa, as well as radio for interest groups such as feminist radio stations (see for e.g. Ayzanoa 1999 or Guilhon 1997) or those that have emerged along regionalist or ethnic lines (see for e.g. *Media Development* 1996, 1997).

### 2.2.1.iii. Four other major elements of radio practice

In between the two ends of this continuum lie various methodological approaches to development through radio that have combined elements of the message-sending with elements of the radio-for-self-expression. Four major strands of practice stand out for mention:

- Community radio is now a significant contemporary phenomenon in developing countries, particularly in Africa, and may be seen as distinct from radical radio, in that it has an all round developmental mission and consciously eschews political, ethnic or religious affiliations. Its simplest definition is *radio by and for local people*. A typical community radio station is based in a small provincial town, broadcasts on a relatively low-power FM signal, is licenced to carry more talk than music, employs local people, uses mainly local language(s), is governed by a board representing a wide variety of local interests, allows permanent open access to the studio by local people and prioritises local concerns in its programming (see for e.g. Buckley 2000; Myers

2000). A great degree of participation is possible with community radio, which, when functioning at its best, allows listeners to make their own programmes, respond to broadcasts either in-person, on-air, or via an intermediary producer or 'animator', and to organise their own on-air debates (see for e.g. Dadjo, 1998).<sup>4</sup>

- Radio that is based around listening groups has a relatively long history dating back to the Canadian Farm Forums of the 1940s and developing initially in Francophone West Africa in the 1960s (Ilboudo, 2001). During the 60s and 70s such groups were used mainly by government ministries – notably agriculture departments as a complement to agricultural extension. The basic point of organising members of an audience into groups, from communicators' point of view, is firstly to make sure target groups have access to a radio and secondly to ensure that through peer and/or animator support, they put into practice what they hear on air, after having had the chance to discuss, question and 'own' it for themselves. The model has endured, with various adaptations, to the present, including in Eritrea. It is noteworthy that many of the contemporary initiatives are perhaps more participatory and discussion-based than some of the earlier models documented by Bates (1984)<sup>5</sup>. Contemporary examples include the Development Through Radio (DTR) listening groups of Southern Africa (Warnock 2001; Matewa 2002), of which more will be mentioned later<sup>6</sup>.
- *Radio rurale* is another approach that has attempted to operationalise audience participation via the idea of the radio producer as development agent (*animateur*). It has been championed notably in Francophone West Africa, by FAO and UNICEF and is largely based on experiences and principles summarised by Querre (1992). *Radio rurale* is essentially a state-run but decentralised developmental radio service which aims to foreground rural people's priorities and views to create an impetus at grassroots level for self-help and community-based development initiatives. At its core is the rural

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<sup>4</sup> Under the heading of Community Radio, mention must be made of the first women's community radio in Africa, Mama FM in Uganda, which opened recently: see [www.wougnnet.org/Documents/UMWA/mamafm.html](http://www.wougnnet.org/Documents/UMWA/mamafm.html).

<sup>5</sup> Although, for a participatory success story from the 1980s, see Aw (1992) about Radio Candip in the (then) Zaire.

<sup>6</sup> See also Lucas (1999) and Singhal and Rogers (1999) for examples of full accounts of some contemporary radio club project in the Philippines and India respectively.

radio 'animator' who acts both as a producer/technician and as a facilitator for the articulation of rural people's problems and aspirations. As such, the process is paramount and often centres on outdoor broadcasts built around 'public games' which provoke debate and analysis about a particular local developmental problem (e.g. how to ensure a clean water supply), in pursuit of communal solutions (see also Ilboudo 2001 and Nombéré 2000).

- Large-scale radio dramas are emerging as a distinct and increasingly popular phenomenon in developmental radio; their distinction being that they are mostly international, aid-funded, initiatives driven by a belief in the power of entertainment in the service of education and development – 'edutainment'. They are relatively resource-intensive, emphasise high production values, and can often reach large audiences (Myers, 2002). Very different from state-run radio services, they are mostly discrete projects which concentrate on just one soap opera or a package of a drama with a discussion-programme attached, designed to convey one or several developmental messages, or to help foster behavioural or social change through discussion, by dramatising controversial or sensitive issues. The theory which underpins edutainment or behaviour change through drama has been articulated by Bandura (1977) Sabido (see Singhal, 1999), Storey (1997) and Galavotti (2001), and centres on affective identification by individuals with fictional characters.

### **2.2.2. Radio for Education**

The aim of this section is to give a brief overview of the use of radio for non-formal adult basic education (ABE), by which is meant programmes equivalent to primary schooling (comprising literacy, oral expression, numeracy and problem solving) and programmes related to life-skills such as basic health, nutrition, family planning, agriculture and other vocational skills (Spronk, 1999; Yates & Tilson, 2000).

The literature on distance education for adults in the developing world, which looks at all levels of education and different types of delivery mechanisms, from correspondence courses to video-conferencing, to new ICTs, will not be reviewed, (but see for example Dodds 1996, Perraton 2000, Pridmore and Nduba 2000, and

Yates 2000); neither will the considerable literature on broadcasting in education which includes television as well as radio, and which tends to concentrate on industrialised countries, children's education or on further or professional training for adults (see for example Robinson 1992, Bates 1984, Mason 1994).

Literature on the ways in which women may prefer to learn, both informally and non-formally, is useful for understanding the ways women could learn via the radio (see for e.g. von Prummer, 2000). In particular, Walters and Manicom (1996) are useful for their summary of the conditions in non-formal education necessary for the proper involvement and empowerment of women. Many of their conclusions are relevant to the use of radio as an educational medium, including: starting from where women are, not only geographically, but social location and emotional contexts as well; giving women a voice; taking women's experience and expertise as the point of departure; finding the balance between facilitation and control; and, finally, creating the time and space for learning. Interestingly, they recommend that 'a place away from the 'the everyday' and from home is often a catalyst in an empowering education process' (Walters and Manicom, 1996, quoted in Anderson and Spronk, 2000:p.62).

### *A typology*

It is convenient to divide ABE by radio as follows: interactive radio instruction; curriculum-based distance education; and group-learning (radiophonic schools). Across all methods there are some fundamental opportunities and constraints to radio as an educational technology. The opportunities are that radio can bring something of the outside world into the learning environment; can stimulate the imagination; can provide economies of scale (Siaciwena, 2000); can reach remote and marginalised communities and those sections of communities segregated by tradition (e.g. women and girls); is relatively cheap and portable at the point of consumption; and is a familiar and ubiquitous technology presenting few operating difficulties for teachers or pupils.

The constraints include the fact that radio is ephemeral and therefore difficult to refer back to (though this can be corrected to some extent with the use of audio-

cassettes<sup>7</sup>); its content is arguably harder to retain and easier to 'tune out of' than visual media. Moreover, it requires a certain level of 'listening literacy', meaning the ability to understand and extrapolate a narrative sequence not only without the aid of visual stimuli, but also from a single source (de Fossard, 1994). In a pedagogical setting it cannot answer unanticipated learners' questions, it cannot resolve misunderstandings, it cannot supervise activities or verify progress and cannot be paced according to the individual needs of listeners and learners (Waniewicz, 1972; Zeitlyn, 1992). Consequently, it has almost always been found necessary to provide this support by providing 'live' back-up through facilitators, teachers or teaching assistants. Furthermore there are, invariably, practical timetabling and technical constraints, (e.g. difficulties of reception, shortages of batteries, lack of electrical power, lack of repair facilities in the event of mechanical breakdown) all of which are all too common in developing countries.

#### 2.2.2.i. Interactive Radio Instruction

Radio in schools usually takes the form of interactive radio instruction (or IRI) in which the radio partly replaces the teacher, and delivers lessons on-air according to a pre-set syllabus, requiring the student to respond verbally and/or with written assignments during and after the lesson. IRI has, on rare occasions, been used for adult basic education in school-like environments; an example of which are the Study Centres (or open secondary schools) in Southern Africa, which allow adults to come for daily supervised study using a mix of print, radio and other audio-visual media (Edirisingha<sup>b</sup>, 1999). But in these cases the adult learners have prior experience of schooling and are individually motivated to continue their education. Consequently, this Study Centre model does not necessarily answer the needs of poor non-literate adults - particularly women - in far-flung rural areas who invariably have no experience of schooling at all, and who are unlikely to find such centres in their immediate vicinities.

#### 2.2.2.ii. Curriculum-based distance education

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<sup>7</sup> Audio cassettes allow back-referral and freedom from the constraints of the broadcasting schedule, but from the provider's point of view they are more costly to distribute than a radio signal, and for users, audio cassette players are more expensive to buy and to run than radios.

Another format of education-by-radio is curriculum-based or technical knowledge-based distance education. This format sometimes uses IRI, but it takes place completely outside a school or a school-like environment. In this model, learners are normally on their own, listening at home; sometimes they will be organised to meet periodically in groups or assemble for tests or for short intensive face-to-face trainings at points during their course. Radio can be used as the primary means of training/instruction, but almost without exception it has been found necessary to combine it at least with printed materials and face-to-face support; in many cases radio is combined with other 'second generation' media such as television and video (Harry & Khan, 2000). Usually this use of radio is aimed at working adults wishing to upgrade their educational levels at a secondary or tertiary level (Dodds, 1994), but several of these types of projects have also been developed at an ABE level for the benefit of nomadic populations or to compensate for difficulties of terrain (see for e.g. Robinson 1995, 1999, about women's education by radio in the Gobi desert; see also Edirisinga (b)

1999). A difficulty from the individual learner's point of view is maintaining interest and discipline to complete the course, without the encouragement and social draw of a peer-group or regular classes. Hence the need, as evidenced by experience, for human back-up of some kind, be it an occasional visit from a teacher or encouragement from volunteer facilitators<sup>8</sup>. From the provider's end, ensuring the necessary face-to-face support for individual learners, even on an occasional basis, is costly, labour-intensive and logistically problematic in difficult terrain.

### 2.2.2.iii. Group-learning via radio

The organisation of adults into study groups is probably the most widespread and successful method of using radio for ABE. The group setting overcomes the problems of isolation and motivation in individual listening, while the use of radio can allow wider coverage and greater economies of scale than conventional adult classes (Siaciwena, 2000). The model to which many contemporary radio groups hark back is the 'radiophonic schools' in Columbia, which spread to other countries in Latin

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<sup>8</sup> Possibly the only radio education project worldwide which is attempting to deliver a course of training *purely* by radio is the APEP/Media Support Solutions Radio-Based Distance Learning for Afghan Primary School Teachers entitled *It's Great to Learn*. Because of mountainous terrain, insecurity, lack of roads and other communications infrastructure, it is not possible to back-up the on-air training with print or in-person (von Seibold, 2003; Adam 2004).

America in the 1950s (Bates, 1984). The purpose is usually to teach literacy and other school-equivalent forms of education, and often to couple this with themes used in the literacy primers relating to life skills like nutrition, animal husbandry, craft-making and so on (see for e.g. Siabi-Mensah 2000). Almost all cases use radio animators, facilitators or qualified teachers. In some cases, such groups can be radical forums for raising rural people's awareness of their human, political and economic rights (see for example Corrales' (1995) case study in Honduras). The key challenges of this method are to ensure that radio programmes, forum discussions and supporting literature get delivered together; that facilitators are trained and suitable for the job; and that proper links are made with other developmental support-services (where they exist), such as with agricultural extension officers.

### **2.2.3 Key debates in the field of educational and developmental radio**

The purpose of this section of the review is to highlight the main debates and issues surrounding the subject of educational and developmental radio.

#### 2.2.3.i. The 'transmission vs. participation' debate

Probably the most profound debate in educational and developmental communications centres on the legacy of Freire's (1970,1973) work, and the questions he raised about the very purpose of education and development (as outlined in Chapter 1). If, as Freire said, liberation and empowerment were to be the outcome of education and the goal of development, then dialogue was crucial. Dialogue - between teacher and learner, development agents and rural people, communicators and receivers, as equals – thus became the key concept in the participatory approaches which started emerging in the late 1970s and 1980s. Top-down, 'banking' and one-way approaches were rejected, and those approaches which saw communication as a transmission of information have been variously accused of a fundamental lack of respect for the target audience, an imposition of neo-colonialist values at odds with indigenous oral culture and knowledge, and/or of manipulating the target audience through the use of dubious advertising techniques (Mody 1991, Servaes, 1989, Diaz-Bordenave, 1977).

Moreover, the nature of information itself has been questioned, and thinkers like Dervin (1989) have distinguished between 'information-as-description' and 'information-as-construction', positing that the sense people make of media messages is never limited to what sources intend; therefore it is important to understand and to use the experiential realities of the audience and involve both audience and communication planners in the construction of information (Windahl et al., 1992).

In development communications, the involvement of both media-makers and media-consumers has been sought through audience-participation based approaches, as articulated notably by Mody (1991), as a more participatory adaptation of some of the earlier models, such as the 'P' process (Johns Hopkins University Centre for Communication Programs, 1984). Other participatory practitioners (see for e.g. PLA Notes, 1997) have seen media as a tool for promoting participation in the development process in its own right, drawing on, for example, the Fogo islanders' experiences with film-making in 1967 in Canada which was one of the first well-documented uses of participatory media for community decision-making leading to self-development (Fraser & Restrepo-Estrada, 1998).

Radio's greatest problem has been its one-way nature, and the search for a dialogical relationship between broadcaster and audience has pulled radio in various different directions. Participatory credentials are claimed by a wide range of styles, from programmes which simply allow listeners to give occasional feedback on-air; through radio clubs which use radio as a catalyst for a circular communication loop between producers and listeners; to community radio stations where radio is regarded as a forum for intra-community dialogue (see Dagon, 2001 for various examples). In pedagogical settings, radio nearly always needs to be complimented by human back-up, so that learners can ask questions, and can be monitored and encouraged in their learning (Perraton & Creed, 2000).

Other mechanisms have been attempted, such as distributing postage-paid aerogrammes to learners in rural groups to facilitate postal feedback to producers (Ahmad & Khan, 1994). Question and answer sessions in response to written or verbal requests have always been a popular radio format, but they suffer from the ever-present possibility of broadcasters selecting-out anything controversial. 'Phone-

ins' are becoming increasingly popular in urban and semi-urban areas of developing countries, thus allowing a degree of immediate interchange between presenters and audience<sup>9</sup>. Community radio, being physically close to its listeners is in a privileged position to allow access to the studio by local people, and its animators can gather *vox pop* more easily than mainstream broadcasters situated in capital cities. However, even with community radio there will always be those who are excluded for reasons of, for example, disability, or membership of a marginalised group (Myers, 2000).

Another method of feed-back and feed-forward has been developed by the Development Through Radio (DTR) listening groups in Southern Africa where club members make radio programmes themselves about their developmental needs. These recordings are then sent back to the initiating radio producer to be played on-air, to spark discussion among the audience, and to be responded to by service-providers or politicians, again on-air (Chalimba, Makumbe, & Shuffell, 2002). Apart from direct material benefit, there is also evidence that such clubs are empowering their (mainly female) members to speak up in public and to gain a greater awareness of their civil rights (Warnock, 2001; Chalimba, 2002). As such, these clubs may be approaching Brecht's ideal of radio 'making exchange possible' and 'transform[ing] the reports of those who govern into answers to the questions of those governed' (Silberman, 2000:43). However, their effectiveness is necessarily circumscribed by the ability of services to respond to their needs, which, in poor economies will not always be possible, and by the authorities' willingness to be called to account, which is, of course, far from being the case in many undemocratic societies.

Participation can easily become almost as 'directed' as top-down initiatives and there is some argument about what true participatory communications are (Waisbord, 2003). Recently there have been efforts made to close the gap between the traditional transmission paradigm and participatory theories, as articulated notably by the Rockefeller Foundation's 'Communication for Social Change' approach (see Figueroa, Kincaid, Rani, & Lewis, 2002). There are arguments for both approaches: whereas the participatory model is the most current, there are clearly arguments for information-based approaches at times, and even for awareness-raising and

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<sup>9</sup> See Watson (1996) for an account of the successful 'Capital Doctor' phone-in programme in Uganda.

persuasion in some cases; for example in emergency or conflict situations (see for e.g. Chin, 2000).

### 2.2.3.ii. The effects debate

The effectiveness, or not, of message-sending or information-based approaches, whether in radio or in mass-communications in general, is a much-contested area (see McQuail, 1994 for summaries; Melkote, 1991). Part of the difficulty is the perennial problem of convincingly demonstrating that attitude or behaviour change is attributable to a specific medium (i.e. radio), and not to other factors, such as socio-economic status, other media or non-media influences. Another problem is how behaviour change is actually measured, for example, whether or not effects are sustained in the long-term (Waisbord, 2003).

Various research studies have demonstrated the positive impact of message-based broadcasting for disseminating research findings and supplementing the work of agricultural extensionists (Chapman, Blench, Kranjac-Berisavljevic, & Zakariah, 2003 is a recent example), and Weerasinghe (1996) has even suggested that radio is a reasonable substitute for agent-based conventional extension methods. Particularly in the field of health, there have been some rigorous studies showing positive results of radio effects, where treatment areas have been separated from non-treatment areas, (see for e.g. Rogers et al., 1997). However, other studies such as Yoder et al. 1996, have challenged such kinds of effects. Remarkable results in terms of behaviour change *may* be possible, but probably only in some very specific circumstances, for example, where the means to change are easily available and affordable or where radio has been part of a concerted campaign backed up with other media, by interpersonal communication and, in some cases, even by legislation (see Harris, 1999 for various examples).

A related area of debate has been around why people behave as they do, and about where and how interventions in the chain of psychological and social events which lead to behaviour change should (or can) be made. Various models have been developed and used to understand both individual and social change, but again, this area is still contested (for an overview, see Manoncourt, 2000).

### 2.2.3.iii Policy Issues

Adult basic education through radio, or, for that matter by any means, is almost invariably given low priority in developing countries (Harry & Khan, 2000). Dodds (1994) has called adult and non-formal education the 'Cinderella of education provision' and has shown how they have failed to catch the sustained imagination of politicians, administrators or educators, or to find an institutional niche. Perraton points out how educational broadcasting is almost always 'in an out-building of the ministry of education' (cited in Anderson and Spronk 2000:64) - as it certainly is in Eritrea. Consequently, at the root of considerations of radio for education and development for women, is the issue that it is a subject that embodies almost all elements of what Chambers (1983) has called the 'lasts' of development, namely the rural, the uneducated, those without economic power or political influence; and all the more so because it concerns the group that has been called the biggest minority of them all, namely women.

Of course, at the heart of what studies like the present one are arguing is that ABE for women should be given higher policy priority. While there is no doubt that education can contribute positively to women's lives in the developing world, it is important, nonetheless, to bear in mind that education is not necessarily a neutral or trustworthy term (Escobar, 1995). As Bloch and Vavrus (1998:4) point out:

'Education is not a benign 'good' at every moment of its historical path, but rather it is a set of practices that have been used differently by individuals, groups, government, and international agencies, depending on their intention, power and conceptions of gender.'

Policies which govern the way radio is used are also a highly debated area. In Africa, with the relatively recent impetus for liberalisation and the pluralism and channel choice that has ensued, many questions are now being raised about the educational and developmental remit once assumed by the state (Deane J et al., 2002; Okigbo, 1996). In many countries in Africa and Asia, there is growing pressure on state broadcasters to commercialise, which often means high air-time

fees for both state-run and civil society organisations wishing to continue providing educational and public-service programming on former state-channels (Commonwealth of Learning, 2000; Deane et al., 2002; Metcalf & Gomez, 1998). In some cases, the converse situation applies; for example, where state broadcasting had previously failed to cater for a multiplicity of languages through lack of radio airtime (e.g. Ghana) and poor transmission /reception in remote areas (e.g. Zambia), liberalisation and pluralisation of the airwaves has now enabled educational and public-service-type broadcasting to reach smaller language and interest groups by means of more small private FM and community radio stations (Siaciwena, 2000). Some commentators have hailed the vibrancy and innovation of new commercial radio stations, and have not lamented the decline of what has been viewed as the propagandist broadcasting structures of the colonial legacy. Others, however, are pessimistic about the new commercial stations ever reaching beyond urban areas, or having the capacity or the will to fulfill a pro-poor broadcasting remit (see for e.g. Deane J et al., 2002; Issiaka, 1998).

## **2.3. Previous Literature on Women and Radio and Rural Broadcasting**

Having surveyed the main methods and issues in educational and developmental radio, this section examines how previous literature has explored the two areas of direct concern, firstly, rural African women and their consumption and reception of radio and secondly, broadcasters and their production of radio content for rural audiences.

### **2.3.1. Women and Radio**

Before the fieldwork for this study was done (i.e. 1995/96) there were very few independent studies of radio from rural women's perspective and/or studies which applied a gender analysis to developmental/educational broadcasting, anywhere in the developing world. This lacuna is still evident, and has been confirmed by Omotayo et al (1997), Sever (2003) and Lacey (2003). McKee (2000:96) also identifies the need for 'more operational research...to determine the most effective way to use radio to reach [women and children].' Since the fieldwork, there has been

an increasing interest in radio for education and development. But the only study which is comparable to this one is Usman's (2001) study from Nigeria, of Fulbe women learning by radio, but this is an article based on an unspecified number of conversations with some market women, and cannot be said to be a representative case-study. Most of the other work on this subject are either short articles concentrating on practical experiences in the field, ~~or~~ more polemical pieces about the need for better representation in and access to broadcasting, or short presentations to international forums which tend to concentrate on generalities. Reports and evaluations of radio projects ~~also are sometimes helpful, but~~ need to be treated with caution, as they are often written by those closest to the projects, who may have a vested interest in giving them a successful account.

Despite this lack of research evidence, various assertions have been and continue to be made about the potential of radio to educate and to promote development for and by rural women. ~~Such assertions are exemplified by the following:~~

'Radio remains the most powerful and yet the cheapest mass medium for reaching large numbers of people...Although men own the majority of radio receivers, women can listen to programmes at home in the evenings when the main chores of the day are finished... Radio can promote dialogue and debate ...[and] provide a platform for the expression of rural women's needs, opinions and aspirations' (Balit, 1999 no page numbers).

'Distance education through community-based radio has the potential to take knowledge and learning to the doorsteps of women and farm households, overcoming geographical, cultural and economic barriers' (Lucas, 1999:5).

'Women make up a bigger percentage of people living in rural areas hence the urgent need to equip them with sustainable information. Although men own the majority of radio receivers, women can listen to programmes when they are doing their normal chores...Radio enables women to voice their concerns and speak about their aspirations...' ~~Find one other quote....~~ (Foadey, 2004:4).

‘Women’s education, is as we know, so vital for all aspects of child survival and development. Radio could help accelerate girls’ access to schooling, and provide supplemental learning, if it could reach women at times that they can listen.’  
(Bouhafa, 1998:4)

Although not writing specifically about women in developing countries, Lacey (2004:150) makes a persuasive case for the ‘particular relationship between women and radio’ and argues that radio answers to some universal aspects of women’s experience, such as ‘the treatment of sensitive issues, the telling of stories and the building of communities, both real and imagined.’ She argues, furthermore, for the ‘blindness of the medium’ being a liberating experience for women who are so often judged on appearances, and also that the ‘gently sloping learning curve’ of radio technology encourages women’s involvement in the studio.

Much has been written from feminist perspectives about women’s representation in the mass media, and some of this has looked at developing countries (see for e.g. Gallagher 1981, 1997; Allen et. al. 1996; *Media Development* 2000). However, little of this has been specifically about radio. Most of the scholarly work on women and radio has concentrated on European and North American radio and on women’s access to and work within it, as media makers, (see for instance Cramer, 1993; Creedon, 1993; Karpf, 1980; Mitchell, 2000), although Mata’s, and Arriola’s documenting of experiences of feminist radio stations in different countries in Latin America represent a few exceptions to this general Northern bias (Arriola, 1992; Mata, 1994).

Before reviewing the little that has been written on women and radio in Africa, it is worth noting that, by contrast with the radio literature, there is a relatively large, and growing, body of literature on women and new information and communication technologies (ICTs) in developing countries (see for e.g. Sandler 2002; Commonwealth of Learning 2000; Rathgeber 2000). In most cases, radio does not seem to come within its scope and is, by implication, relegated to an out-dated world of ‘low-tech’ media<sup>10</sup>. Nonetheless, many of the same gender issues can - and perhaps should - be read across, as applying equally to the world of ICTs as to that

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<sup>10</sup> Although, note Marker et al’s *inclusion* of radio in a definition of ICTs, for the purposes of DFID policy (Marker et. al. 2002).

of radio. For example, UNIFEM calls for 'gender analysis of telecommunications policies in every country...and disaggregated by sex and qualitative assessments on the use of ICTs to understand how to shape policies to ensure equal access to women and girls' (Sandler, 2002:28): the same could be argued for radio broadcasting. Indeed, given the fact that digital technologies lag far behind radio in terms of penetration in developing countries, it may be argued that radio as an existing, ubiquitous technology, should be given priority both in international forums, and in terms of research. Another theme which has arisen recently in the ICT and gender debates is one around social and cultural attitudes of and towards women and technology. Kirkup (1999) writes about the use of the Internet in education and says:

'For those of us concerned with women's education, we would be wise to begin with the premise that the new technologies are gendered, and gendered to the disadvantage of women' (cited in Harry & Khan, 2000:133).

The same could also be said of radio.

### 2.3.1.i. Some overviews

In an overview about gendered listening patterns in developing countries, Bouhafa (1998:4) draws attention to the gender gap in radio access ~~in~~ across developing countries, concluding that although 'radio can and should... be the centrepiece of any communication strategy to promote child survival', unfortunately, 'reaching women [by radio] remains challenging.' By summarising some of the statistics compiled by the UN and other development agencies, Bouhafa shows, *inter alia*, that in Benin and Bangladesh, for example, access to radio by men is 42.3 and 56 percent respectively, whereas for women it is as low as 13.4 and 37 percent. However, apart from plainly demonstrating a consistent gender difference across the developing world, the figures do not explain what 'access' means beyond a vague reference to women 'not listening as frequently as men' and radio not 'reaching women at times that they can listen.' Does this mean that women listen less to the household set than their husbands/sons? Do fewer women own radios, or do women have less time and social contacts to enable them to listen to radios owned by others

outside the household? These are some of the questions that few large-scale media surveys answer, since they are mostly not disaggregated by gender<sup>11</sup>.

Ilboudo provides some recent statistics from West Africa which, again, show that fewer women listen to radio than men, though the differentials are not strikingly wide, and they also show that radio listening is high in both sexes (for example, 89% of men and 87.8% of women had listened to any channel on the radio in Dakar, Senegal the previous day (May/June 1999) (Ilboudo, 2004:2). However, these figures are mainly from urban areas, so are not strictly relevant to our purpose of understanding rural patterns. Interestingly, though, Ilboudo points to 'a study in Mali in 1997'<sup>12</sup> done among 210 rural people which shows more women listening to radio than men. This he ascribes to the availability of a local radio station, broadcasting in the local language – which, he implies, was proving its popularity among rural women.

Another relatively large survey of 3000 rural women in four African countries (Sibanda, 2001) about ownership and access to radio had some interesting findings about women mostly being able to choose the channel themselves and finding time to listen to radio regularly during their daily lives, even when they did not own a set. Yet it suffers from a disappointing lack of rigour in that it does not state which countries the research was carried out in, nor how the sample was taken.

### 2.3.1.ii Control and Access

In a smaller, though methodologically more rigorous, study of 241 small-holder farmers (both male and female) in Kenya, Ngechu (1992) found that there was much less control and access to radio by women than the Sibanda study implies. A comparison of control and listenership by family members revealed that 'fathers exercise more control over the radio sets and listened to more programmes than other family members' (1992:66). Where mothers control the use of radio, it is the sons who listen most, and only 14.1% of these female farmers listen to radio on a regular basis. Furthermore, daughters were found to have no control over the radio

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<sup>11</sup> Women's 'statistical invisibility' is, of course, common in many areas of development studies (Brandt, 1980). One work on radio and adult education among the Fulani in Nigeria, only interviewed men, yet it consistently presents its findings as purporting to represent 'Fulani views' and 'Fulani responses' etc. (Umar, 1988).

<sup>12</sup> No more information was given, but it would be interesting to follow-up the details of this Malian example.

at all, and mothers as well as fathers were found to favour radio access by sons. Ngechu thus concludes 'The gender prejudice within families, households and the society at large is evident in terms of control of communication technologies' (1992:67).

The prevailing pattern of differential radio access by gender in Africa, is corroborated by Okunna (1992) in her study of sources of development information among rural women in Nigeria. Here, another important factor in women's radio access is brought out, namely how male members of the family (mainly sons, in Okunna's case-study) take the radio away from the household, often for long periods of time (e.g. on migration to urban areas), thus depriving women of the chance to listen. That, in Africa, the household radio often passes out of the female domain because of male control and greater male mobility is corroborated by Spitulnik (2000) in her study of 'radio culture' in Zambia, and by Tronvoll (1996) in his anthropological study of the way referendum information was communicated to rural people in Eritrea in 1993:

'the radio is a specifically *male* possession. One would never see a woman walking alone carrying a radio, which is what all the men who have a radio do. Women do not listen to the radio as they go about their daily work, as men often do when sitting in the compound, preparing or repairing some agricultural equipment.' (Tronvoll, 1996:29)

### 2.3.1.iii. Constraints to listening to the radio

Ilboudo lists the main constraints to radio (and television) access by rural African women as: 'poverty, traditions and culture, the languages used, women's multiple roles, unfavourable broadcast times, [and] programmes made without prior needs assessments' (Ilboudo, 2004:4 researcher's translation). However, †This list is comprehensive, but perhaps †the most common and widespread obstacle for women accessing radio is lack of time due to rural women's heavy workloads. Ngechu quotes 'one woman farmer' from Kenya, who is perhaps typical:

'she raised the issue of her multiple roles in the household as a mother, wife, grandmother and farmer and told us that, although her husband had a radio, she never listened to it since she was so busy.' (Ngechu, 1992:63)

Interestingly, Ngechu's respondent goes on to say that if radio listening groups were created she could spare the time 'to listen to other farmers since such shared education might make her...more productive' (:63). This raises the issue of opportunity-cost in relation to radio listening; in other words, radio listening may be worth women's while if it really were, or were considered to be, of productive value. Although it is difficult to find further evidence for this hypothesis in the radio literature, it is confirmed by McSweeney and Freedman (1982) in relation to the take-up of educational opportunities by women. They found that rural women in (then) Upper Volta, took up educational activities in greater numbers when their time was freed-up by the introduction of certain appropriate technologies like grinding mills and carts. However, they took up only the newly offered activities which visibly improved their lives, such as classes explaining the use of water filters and functional literacy, and that, rather than creating 'free time', the technologies allowed extra time mostly to be spent on other household tasks (McSweeney B. G. & Freedman M., 1982).

Problems of timing and scheduling arise in most discussions of radio and rural women (e.g. Usman 2001, Bouhafa 1998, Balit, 1999. Myers 2000; (UNDP/World Bank/WHO, 1997a). Although there is of course great variation across the developing world, the evening is often assumed to be rural people's least busy time; however, typically, while men often relax, women are still busy. In Rwanda, Myers et. al (2000:17) found:

'One woman in Rutongo, [who said] 'we can't listen to [the educative soap opera] *Urunana* [at 6.45pm] because we're bringing the goats indoors, washing the children before their bed-time and starting to cook supper.' Other women also brought up problems of women's mobility after dark: if they had no set themselves, they were unable to go to their neighbour's, whereas men were able to move about to friends and to bars, in order to listen to shared sets.'

Furthermore, assumptions cannot be made about all women's work patterns being the same, even in one discrete linguistic area. For example, in Nigeria, one radio initiative assumed that women in Hausaland were mostly in purdah and therefore had radio as a regular companion all day, but then had to take into account the minority Maguzawa women in the same area, most of whom are Christians, who spend a lot of time engaged in heavy farm work, and who therefore could only listen in the evenings (UNDP/World Bank/WHO, 1997a).

#### 2.3.1.iv. Linguistic, economic and cultural barriers

Another barrier to radio listening for women is language. In most African countries the daily schedule of the average national radio station will typically be divided between a number of national and local languages. Thus, the more languages an individual knows, the more radio programmes will be of potential relevance. Mother-tongue-only speakers will be able to comprehend at best a few hours' radio out-put per day, at worst none at all, if their particular language is considered too much of a minority language to be covered on radio. Language exclusion is more pertinent for rural women than for men because fewer women speak other languages than their own, due to lower general levels of schooling and lower mobility outside their immediate communities. The preference by women to listen to radio programmes in their mother-tongue is confirmed by Ngechu (1992) and Usman (2001). [Ilboudo \(2004\) also finds that among rural housewives in West Africa there is a clear preference for radio stations which broadcast in local languages.](#) African community radios gain much of their initial popularity among women by providing a local-language service where none existed before, and providing them with the opportunity to express themselves publicly in their own idiom (see for e.g. Myers, 2000; Naughton, 1997; Wanyeki, 2001) .

There are clearly economic constraints on radio listening for all poor rural people – both women and men (see for example Skuse, 2003); however, there is some evidence that women's lack of independent financial means may make radio-listening opportunities even more limited for them. In rural economies where it is mainly men who have access to cash, they will also be the family member buying and taking decisions about the use of the radio set and batteries. For example, in Mali, the researcher has observed that families saved radio batteries for the 'important'

programmes such as the news, which meant that women listeners felt their husbands would be angry if they were found to be 'wasting' the batteries by listening to entertainment or women's programmes.

Cultural constraints on women's use of radio as a technology are significant and are documented to some degree in the literature on gender and ICTs and in the distance educational literature. For example, Juma (2000) in a study from Kenya points out that 'traditionally women have defined roles in society that do not influence the type of equipment used in the home. It is a man's domain to decide to own simple tools of communication such as radios, audio-cassette players and television.' She goes on to note that computers, the Internet and e-mail are seen by 'many women as foreign, western (*mzungu*) white man's gadgets. Women in the rural areas will have nothing to do with foreign things that mean little to their way of life' (in COL 2000:46). Evans (1995) points out that women from all classes and types of society lack confidence and self-esteem to pursue education in the first place, and are particularly disadvantaged in matters of technology which have traditionally been seen as part of the male oriented sphere. Although radio technology is, by now, more familiar than it was, say fifty years ago, radio sets can still be regarded by some rural women, particularly of the older generation, as alien (see for e.g. Bouhafa,1998).

Although his proposals are not explicitly based on any systematic study, Ilboudo (2004:4) proposes some useful general guidelines as a response to some of rural women's radio problems

'liberate women's voices' through involvement in the production of radio programmes; strengthen women's capacity for negotiation and action through literacy; lighten women's workloads to free them up to listen'.

He also sees community radio as a large part of the solution:

'create community radio (CR) stations which address women's concerns; train male and female animators at CRs in IEC and in gender awareness; base the production/reception of programmes on existing associations in order to form radio clubs; link CRs together to allow them to network and address and

exchange programmes about gender issues at a local, regional and national level (2004:4, researcher's own translation).

#### 2.3.1.v. Issues of interest and relevance

Evidence about the extent to which radio in Africa caters for women's interests and educational needs is strikingly sparse. Usman (2001:98) is one exception, documenting Fulbe women's view that although 'radio is a necessity' for them, they are sometimes 'bored' by the 'rather rigid pedagogy' of the educational programmes on Nigerian radio. She concludes that there is a need for more female presenters, practical programmes about market skills to prevent them being cheated at market, and to involve the women themselves in the planning and production of programmes.

Similarly, other evidence of rural women's preferences in their listening is very location-specific and based on relatively small samples. From the few surveys that have been done, it is quite marked how few women express much enthusiasm for programmes of an agricultural, health, educational or developmental nature, preferring, in the main, news and entertainment programmes. For example, only 7.5 percent of Ngechu's (1992) sample of 105 Kenyan women farmers listened to farming information programmes; only 8 per cent of Omotayo et al's (1997) sample preferred health programmes; and only 2.9 per cent of Matewa's (1992) sample preferred farming/agricultural issues.

#### 2.3.1.vi. Issues of impact

There is a significant body of literature on the impacts of specific communication projects and campaigns on what might be called 'women's issues', that is, sexual and reproductive health, child nutrition, family planning, and so on (see for e.g. Jato et al., 1994; Kinkaid, J.G. Rimon, P.T. Piotrow, & P.L. Coleman, 1992.; Papa et al., 2000; Piotrow et al., 1990; Singhal & Rogers, 1999; Vaughan, E.M. Rogers, A. Singhal, & R.M. Swalehe, 2000). Much of this features large-scale and statistically robust surveys and studies of audience responses in terms of knowledge, attitude and behaviour. A few of these studies are specifically about radio; mostly attempting to

isolate audiences' responses to discrete campaigns or radio serial dramas. Such 'enter-education' surveys are useful from a gender perspective in that they are mostly (but not always) disaggregated by sex, and they demonstrate how women can be drawn into radio-listening in large numbers when entertainment and relatively high production values are used to 'sugar the pill' of educational messages. However, designers and evaluators of enter-educate radio series have noticed that listenership is consistently higher among men than among women, especially in Africa. This contrasts markedly with similar projects in, for example, North America, where the female audience for soap operas is famously high (Vaughan, 2003).

### **2.3.2. Literature on Broadcasting for a rural audience**

As noted above, rural broadcasting is a 'Cinderella' topic, with a corresponding paucity of literature. There is a small body of work on its practical aspects in developing countries, and a large amount of 'grey literature' which constitute mainly reports from aid-funded field projects. But there remains relatively little that analyses the influences, motivations, pressures or constraints in this field of broadcasting.

Manuals and handbooks have been produced for some of the different strands of rural broadcasting practice. They include those for community radio (see for e.g. Mtinda, 1998; Jackson 1997); those produced on IRI (e.g. de Fossard 1994), those covering aspects of creating enter-educate or edutainment dramas (e.g. Brooke 1995; de Fossard 1997); and those on the *radio rurale* approach (Querre 1992). Added to these, there are the sector-specific ones such as those covering broadcasting for health (Adam & Harford, 1998) and those advising on general radio writing and production techniques with developing-country broadcasters in mind, such as manuals for making effective magazine programmes and on-line courses on digital editing.<sup>13</sup>

How these kinds of manuals are used, by whom and for what aspects of practitioners' actual work has not, it seems, been investigated or analysed. Their

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<sup>13</sup> See for example manuals on magazine production from the Mediae Trust: <http://members.aol.com/mediaetr/> and [www.itrainonline.org/itrainonline/english/radio.shtml](http://www.itrainonline.org/itrainonline/english/radio.shtml).

use, as with other 'grey' training materials, seems to be largely a matter of anecdote and hearsay amongst trainers and broadcasters themselves. In some cases, the target audience of these manuals is specified, in others it is referred to generally as 'radio practitioners' or 'scriptwriters'. Some, for example De Fossard's manuals, assume that those writing or producing serial dramas for social change will necessarily be independent of the broadcasting structure that will eventually air the series; others leave the organisational arrangements of the targeted broadcasters relatively vague. Lyra (2004) has made the point that training for journalists to enhance their coverage of development issues may be largely pointless without attention to their institutional circumstances, and to some of the blocks that often prevent broadcasters (particularly those at national level) covering rural issues.

Some of the authors of the manuals and handbooks have tackled the cultural aspects of being a rural broadcaster, notably Querre (1992), who has written with the *radio rurale* type of broadcaster in mind. He has advocated not only a decentralisation of government broadcasting structures, but a decentralisation of broadcasters' attitudes towards rural people:

'The rural radio man's (sic) ...job is to reveal the secrets of rural life. Equipped with common sense, enthusiasm, inventiveness, he is a combination of reporter, motivator, writer, director and producer.' (1992:5)

Much of what Querre advises holds good for community radio animators as well, and sums up the vision for rural radio or farm broadcasting as it is now fostered by the FAO (see for e.g. FAO 2001)

In terms of analysis of the production process for rural and educational/developmental radio, there is little when compared with the amounts which exists in the discipline of mass-communication studies covering other aspects of radio production. A look at the topics covered under production studies in some of the mass-media readers reveals very little about developing countries and almost nothing that analyses the production of educational and developmental radio. One exception to this, in the cultural studies field, is Skuse's (1999) work on the production and consumption of an educational radio soap opera in Afghanistan; in

this, he looks in detail at the cultural influences behind the way content is selected and structured for the education – and entertainment – of a rural audience.

In terms of identifying training and capacity needs, the International Service for national Agricultural Research (ISNAR) (2001) has recently done some interesting practical analysis of training needs and organisational constraints on how agricultural research can be linked with rural radio. Moreover, reports back to donors over the last twenty years have, at times, raised the issue of training and weaknesses of radio producers' organisations; some, though not all, of these problems being related to centralised and outdated state-owned structures (see for e.g. ODI 2003). As a result, there has been some donor interest in supporting training and audience research in support of rural radio, (as evidenced, for e.g. by Niang 2001 and DFID Governance Dept. 2002). However, again, there has been no comprehensive analysis of what this support for training has produced, nor what the needs among educational/developmental broadcasters still are.

## Chapter 3: Context

### 3.1. Introduction

This chapter provides some context and background from a geographical, historical, cultural and socio-economic point of view to the educational situation, to radio broadcasting and the status of women in present-day Eritrea<sup>14</sup>.

Broadcasting and educational systems in Eritrea both owe much to the exigencies of and the theoretical underpinnings to the thirty-year war of independence, which Eritrea waged against Ethiopia between 1961 and 1991. During this time both broadcasting and education were seen by the main fighting force, the EPLF, to be central to the struggle for cultural independence. Broadcasting was of psychological importance to the war effort. Education was central to the EPLF's ideological struggle against 'feudal' traditions and 'backward' practices. Thus, substantial financial and human resources were channelled towards both sectors, and significant policy energy was invested in them. During the same period, the Ethiopian 'occupying power' had its own educational and broadcasting structures in Eritrea, which were run from Addis Ababa. The legacy of that time is still tangible today.

Any discussion of women's position in Eritrea, again, must refer backwards to the 'freedom struggle' years. During this time, Eritrean women gained international renown for their high degree of participation as fighters in the EPLF, and for their social and cultural advancement, whether fighters or not. Like the educational and broadcasting sectors, the attention paid to the advancement of women can be clearly seen to be influencing present-day gender policy, and therefore clearly has importance to the subject at hand.

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<sup>14</sup> The 'present day' and further references in this chapter to 'today' and 'nowadays' refer to the situation prevailing when field-work was done in 1995/96.

## **3.2. Geographical and socio-economic features of present-day Eritrea**

Eritrea is a small country (roughly the size of England (Paice, 1994)) on the Red Sea coast of the Horn of Africa. Its population is officially estimated at between 3.5 and 4 million<sup>15</sup>, although up to a million of these are thought to be living abroad. Tigrinia and Arabic are the working languages, although there are nine ethnic groups: Tigrinia, Tigre, Saho, Bilen, Kunama, Rashaida, Nara, Hedareb, and Afar. The Tigrinia and the Tigre-speakers make up the largest groups (50 per cent and 31 per cent respectively) (UNICEF, 1994). The country is roughly divided equally between Christians and Muslims – predominating in the highlands and lowlands respectively (MRG, 1997, PFDJ website).

Broadly speaking there are three main physiographic zones: the central highlands, the western lowlands and the eastern lowlands. There is huge variation in climate and ways of life across these regions; spanning relatively intensive rainfed agricultural production in the highlands, through the livestock-based, arid areas of the lowlands, right down to the Denkalia Desert where rainfall is almost non-existent. Because the population is 80% rural and largely dependent on rainfall for subsistence, Eritrea is highly vulnerable to drought and food insecurity (UNICEF, 1994). Even in a good agricultural year, Eritrea must still import about half its food requirements (World Bank, 1996).

Settlement patterns vary greatly: in the cool central highlands the rural population density is relatively high as about 64 inhabitants per square kilometre (UNICEF, 1994), whereas the figures for the hot and malaria-infested lowlands vary between 16 and 46 inhabitants per square kilometre (FAO, 2001). About 20 per cent of the population live in the capital, Asmara (pop. 431,000), and due to high urban growth, services in towns are under strain (UNICEF, 1994). Eritrea's economy is based largely on subsistence agriculture, aid imports, remittances from the diaspora population, and a small domestic industrial sector (Tzehaie, 2003). With a per capita Gross Domestic Product of only \$880, it is one of the poorest countries in the world.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> <http://www.shaebia.org/mot.html> (PFDJ (Government of Eritrea) homepage)

<sup>16</sup> Compare Norway (GDP per capita \$28,433) which is top of the Human Development Index and Sierra Leone (GDP per capita \$448) which is at the bottom (UNDP, 2001, quoting 1999 figures).

Eritrea has a large youth population, with one in two people being a child under eighteen, which gives Eritrea a high youth-dependency ratio and a likely significant increase in the population growth rate as the number of women in their child-bearing years (15-45 years) grows (UNICEF, 1994). The fertility rate is relatively high, with women having on average almost 7 children (UNICEF, 1994). Eritrea also has a higher than average share of female-headed-households (about 45 percent), due to the loss of a high numbers of able-bodied men in the war (World Bank, 1996).

### **3.3. Outline of recent history of Eritrea**

Eritrea's 'freedom struggle' had its roots in the immediate post-colonial period which coincided roughly with the end of the Second World War. Eritrea was colonised by Italy between 1885 and 1941, when it was lost to British forces early in the War. It was the Italian occupation that defined Eritrea's modern borders, in that Italian forces reached treaties with the British on the Sudanese border, and fought with Emperor Menelik of Abyssinia, thus defining Eritrea's southern border with Ethiopia (Paice, 1994)<sup>17</sup>.

#### *Italian colonisation*

The colonial years were characterised firstly by proxy rule through traditional leaders, then by an influx of Italian immigrants who expanded and profited from Eritrea's natural resources, and strategic trading position on the Red Sea. Meanwhile, little was done for ordinary Eritreans in terms of welfare, education, or investment in anything but the extractive industries and cash crop agriculture. By the Fascist era a system of semi-apartheid prevailed in many areas, and Italians gained a reputation for cruelty and exploitation (Pateman, 1990). By 1941 there were 760,000 Italians in Eritrea, seriously pressurising the Eritreans for land and resources. There were no secondary schools for Eritreans and only 24 primaries. From the colonialists' point of

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<sup>17</sup> At time of writing the border between Eritrea and Ethiopia is still contested, however. The most recent conflict between the two countries was precisely over where the border lay. Though a peace deal was signed in 2000, the border is yet to be officially demarcated, this being due under UN auspices by 2004. (see <http://www.irinnews.org/report.asp?ReportID=36517>)

view, however, the economy of Eritrea saw something of a boom during the first half of the century, particularly during the Fascist years (Connell 1993).

### *Transition and Federation*

The Italians' defeat at the hands of the British in 1941 did little to change or improve the daily lives of Eritreans. The British continued to use Italians to manage most of the administrative and economic life of the country, whilst also neglecting to provide much more in the way of services for Eritreans, and dismantling much of the existing industry and infrastructure (Paice, 1994; Pankhurst, 1952; Pateman, 1990), although there was a significant expansion of educational provision (Teklehaimanot, 1996).

By the late 1940's Eritrea was in severe economic recession, and it was against this backdrop that the country's fate was discussed at the UN. In 1950 it was decided, (after strong lobbying, particularly from the US, Britain and Ethiopia), that Eritrea should be federated to Ethiopia (Paice, 1994, MRG, 1997). Thus, a UN resolution was passed in December of that year, making Eritrea a 'self governing unit of a federation of which the other member shall be Ethiopia, under the sovereignty of the Ethiopian crown' (MRG, 1997).

### *Annexation and war*

It was after this time that the beginnings of Eritrean resistance started to emerge, as Eritreans felt their claims for sovereignty were being ignored. Repression was the order of the day (see for e.g. Wilson 1991:23). Various groupings of organised resistance began in the late 1950s, and by 1961 a relatively significant military force had formed in the guise of the ELF (Eritrean Liberation Front). This began what would become a thirty year guerrilla war against the regime in Ethiopia, first as resistance to Hailie Selassie's army and administration, and then continuing and intensifying under Mengistu's Dergue, which ran Ethiopia from 1974 onwards.

In 1962, the status of federation was forcibly changed to one of annexation and guerrilla resistance to Ethiopia evolved, during the 60s and 70s, into both a much wider struggle, but also into a civil war between Eritreans. This civil conflict was essentially between the ELF (which was predominantly Muslim) and the EPLF

(Eritrean People's Liberation Front), a Christian-Muslim coalition, although dominated by the Tigrinia ethnic group. The civil fighting was at its height between 1972 and 1974, but by 1975 the EPLF emerged as the dominant movement (Paice, 1994, Gottesman, 1998).

During this period, Ethiopian occupation and aggression also intensified, to the point where civilians were being caught in a very brutal conflict, creating tens of thousands of refugees and internally displaced people. Towns were taken and retaken, with the Eritreans gradually gaining ground until a point was reached in 1978 where it looked likely that they would gain victory. However, at this point Ethiopia received a massive injection of military aid from the Soviet Union, which forced the Eritreans to make a 'strategic withdrawal' to the Northern areas of the country. The struggle in the late 1970s and throughout the 80s then entered a different phase, during which the EPLF consolidated its administration in the north, particularly in the mountainous region of Sahel, and in what was known as the 'liberated zones', while continuing to wage a highly organised resistance war against the Dergue on a number of strategic fronts.

### *Liberation*

Despite having always been significantly outnumbered by the Ethiopians in terms of soldiers and firepower, the EPLF started to make some spectacular military victories in the late 1980s (Gottesman, 1998). Meanwhile, the break-up of the Soviet Union adversely affected support to Mengistu and the TPLF (Tigrayan People's Liberation Front) gained strongly in Ethiopia. In 1991 the Mengistu regime was toppled as the tanks of Tigrayan forces rolled into Addis Ababa, and at the same time the Ethiopian army fled Asmara, surrounded by Eritrean fighters finally claiming victory.

Victory notwithstanding, Eritrea in 1991 was a devastated country, with an estimated 100,000 civilians killed and another 600,000 living in refugee camps in Sudan. Agriculture (affected by war and years of drought during the 1980s) and industry were in a state of ruin, land-mines littered the countryside, and Massawa, the main port, had been virtually destroyed. Among fighters, 65,000 had been killed and more than 12,000 disabled. About 90,000 fighters were needing to be demobilised and integrated into civilian life (MRG, 1997)

In 1993, following a referendum in which 99.81% of the voting population voted for independence, Eritrea was formally declared independent, with Isaias Afewerki, the EPLF's former secretary-general, declared President.

### **3.4. Background to the EPLF**

The ideology of the EPLF was strongly influenced by Maoist philosophy (MRG, 1997), and was based on principles of secularism, nationalism, egalitarianism and self-sufficiency. During the war, fighters were fiercely loyal to their cause and received hours of political education as part of their routine training. The EPLF was an intensely serious movement and all units regularly put in time doing hard manual labour to 'proletarianize' their outlooks (Connell, 1993:70). Ignored, as the war largely was by the Western press (Wilson, 1991, Paice, 1994), the EPLF received virtually no military or humanitarian aid and therefore relied on seizing arms from the enemy and on manufacturing and recycling much of its own supplies and equipment from material captured from the Ethiopian army – from medicines to shells (Firebrace and Holland, 1986, Connell, 1993). At its base area in Sahel, it developed its own extensive infrastructure, including garages and repair shops, schools, a pharmacy and a sophisticated central hospital, which even developed a capacity to perform open-heart surgery in the midst of war (MRG, 1997, Gottesman, 1998). Many impressive infrastructure projects were undertaken and completed, as well as a full programme of training for teachers, barefoot-doctors and technicians (Firebrace and Holland, 1986).

The EPLF attempted an extraordinary reforming and modernising social agenda in the liberated areas, running a programme of social re-education and structural change, which touched on all aspects of cultural, administrative and economic life (MRG, 1997). Thus, mainly through the formation of people-based associations, the EPLF attempted to transform the ways villages and communities were governed, land was shared out and agriculture was organised (Gebremedhin, 1996). Industry was transformed to emphasise self-reliance (Wilson 1991), and schools for children and literacy classes for adults were begun, in many places for the first time (Gottesman, 1998). Health care and basic infrastructure, such as roads and

communications also had to be started and run from an almost non-existent base. Much of these services were run on the basis of meeting primary needs, and on a self-taught and self-sufficient basis.

After independence, the EPLF began transforming itself from a fighting force to a government, and changed its name to the PFDJ (People's Front for Democracy and Justice) in 1994. One of its main difficulties, as it has consolidated itself in power, has been to maintain national unity. This has been a challenge in a country of three religions and nine languages, in which large sections of the population experienced EPLF administration during the liberation war, but hundreds of thousands of others lived for years under the repressive policies of the Ethiopian administration, or grew up in refugee camps in Sudan or were scattered across Western Europe and the USA, as exiles (MRG, 1997). Establishment of a civil service and decentralised local government was a priority, and by 1996 a Constitution had been established, following a long period of popular consultation (Pool, 2001). Meanwhile widespread poverty and the threat of drought remained ever-present.

### **3.5. Status and Roles of Women**

*'There is a proverb which says that asking a woman to rest is like making a donkey your guest.'* (cited in Wilson 1991:5-6)

Eritrea is a largely patriarchal society<sup>18</sup>; where land and power is concentrated in the hands of men, and where the importance of the family and the clan (the continuity of which is dependent on the male-line) is paramount (Wilson, 1991). Traditionally, women have not been able to own land or to hold public positions (although there has been a certain amount of reform on both these counts by the EPLF), nor have they had equal status in the eyes of the law, particularly in questions of divorce and property rights. Although there has been much legislation passed recently in terms of reform of, for example, the marriage laws, much of the pre-revolutionary culture still prevails, particularly in rural areas. This is linked to strong religious traditions in both Orthodox Christian and Muslim areas which restrict the movement of women

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<sup>18</sup> The exception to this patriarchal pattern are the Kunama people (about 2 percent of the Eritrean population), whose traditions are matriarchal and whose marriage traditions allow freedom of choice for women (UNICEF, 1994).

outside the domestic realm; which place a high value on virginity before marriage; and which, through practices such as arranged and child-marriages, male priority in nutrition and education, culturally sanctioned domestic violence<sup>19</sup>, and various forms of circumcision (FGM)<sup>20</sup>, limit women's individual freedoms and, in many cases, endanger their health.

### **3.5.1. Evolution of women's status during independence war**

#### **3.5.1.i. Fighters**

A large proportion of the EPLF were women: by 1990 about 30 percent of the EPLF's members were female, and women made up 13 percent of the frontline fighters (UNICEF, 1994). Their extraordinary testimonies illustrate the experiences, motivation and hardships of women fighters. For example Wilson (1991:99) quotes a fighter nicknamed ChuChu:

'women are given six months' training and men get three. But after the training there is no difference – on the front line men and women are the same...After six months [women] are assigned to a particular job – some go to hospitals, some are teachers, some go to garages, some to the front line. So now we have a woman company commander: she does not command only women, but men and women. At least 200 men are under her. There are many women company commanders, squad commanders and platoon commanders. This is not done just for the sake of rights for women but because Eritreans are fighting for freedom, and to fight for freedom you have to have your rights.' (Wilson, 1991:99)

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<sup>19</sup> Pool (2001:96) notes that 'In the customary law of Showat Anseba, it is stated that a husband may beat his wife below the neck as long as it is not damaging.'

<sup>20</sup> According to a 1997 Demographic and Health Survey, 90% of women in Eritrea have undergone some form of genital cutting (FGC). This takes three forms: clitoridectomy, excision and infibulation. One third of women have undergone infibulation, the most severe procedure. Both Muslim and Christians practice some form of female genital cutting. There is no law against FGM/FGC, as the government has decided not to outlaw the practice for fear this would drive the practice underground (U.S. State Dept., 2001). In a short case-study of two rural highland women, UNICEF (1994:118) notes: 'Radio programmes have often warned listeners that female genital mutilation is harmful, but Jemila and Nuraini, at least, were not persuaded. Old beliefs die hard, and both women believe that their girls will need to be circumcised to ensure that they become 'good' women.'

The intense comradeship, the strong emphasis on radical left-wing political awareness, and the progressive gender policies may be said still to have a strong influence on present-day Eritrean life – particularly at government level and among the educated and urban classes.

The fighter culture represented a radical mental and lifestyle change for those in the EPLF ranks; probably more so for women than for men, because of the freedoms it brought – such as the right to study, to work, to choose a husband, to be free from the burden of dowries or bride-price, to travel and dress as one liked. But it also involved an almost complete alienation from family so radically different was it from the traditional social order (Wilson, 1991).

### 3.5.1.ii Civilians

The EPLF attempted radically to transform the status of women not only within its ranks but also among the civilian population. Most of this work was done by the National Union of Eritrea Women (NUEW), formed in 1979 (UNICEF, 1994). Women's emancipation was part of the wider EPLF political ideology, based, as it was, not only on a struggle for political independence but a struggle against all types of exploitation and oppression:

‘So long as freedom is not equally and universally extended to all members of society, so long as there is oppression, there is struggle’ (EPLF, 1973)<sup>21</sup>

Thus, it went about reforming some of the basic laws and customs which adversely affected civilian women's lives; for example by reforming the land laws to allow for land rights for unmarried, divorced and widowed women, and for inheritance and equal sharing of land following divorce (UNICEF, 1994; Wilson, 1991). In 1977 the EPLF also reformed the traditional laws pertaining to marriage, outlawing child- and forced-marriages, prohibiting infibulation, allowing divorce by women, making it an offence to annul a marriage if the bride is not a virgin, and laying down limits on dowries and wedding expenses.

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<sup>21</sup> *Why Are We Waging a Struggle?* Vanguard I (1) quoted in Rentmeesters (1993:79)

Implementation and enforcement of these laws was, and still is, a gradual process. For example, infibulation was outlawed, but EPLF cadres 'decided not to take the legislation further and extend the ban to clitoridectomy because 'this would take the argument beyond women's health and into the sphere of women's rights to and capacity for sexual pleasure which would alienate the people from the more moderate reform' (Wilson, 1991: 138, quoting Silkin, 1990). Other gender issues, such as domestic violence, were also consciously postponed until the more pressing issue of securing independence was achieved (Wilson 1991).

The process of change at the grassroots level was initiated through people's assemblies and on an intensive face-to-face basis, using cadres or 'conscientisers' who would go and spend time in villages, educating villagers according to the EPLF way of thinking. Literacy was regarded by the EPLF as one of the first steps to women's liberation. Connell describes meetings of women's associations in the liberated areas during the 1970s:

'At the first meetings of the women's association, participants were given a historical sketch of patriarchal domination within a broader presentation on the "double oppression" of women. "You have to participate if liberation is to come for all the people" they were admonished...They were told that one of the first projects would be literacy, as they could not play their revolutionary role effectively until they could read and write.' (Connell 1993:105-6)

Some significant changes took place at village level, in terms of traditional laws. For example, women had recourse to the new laws in cases where, for example, they were rejected by their husbands for not having sons, or where ex-husbands did not contribute to child-maintenance payments.

### **3.5.2. Changes in women's status since independence**

Some writers have lauded the post-independence gains made by the EPLF and NUEW on women's behalf. For example Asghedom talks of:

‘EPLF women replacing their aprons with overalls, their wooden spoons with wrenches and pick axes, and their kitchens with offices to help build a new nation’ (Asghedom, 1994, quoted in Gebremedhin, 1996:72)

There have indeed been some significant changes, particularly among the educated and urban population. For example, in terms of women’s participation in politics and public administration, women now constitute 20 percent of the seats in the National Legislative Body, 9 percent in the National Executive Body and about 14 per cent in the National Judiciary system (Gebremedhin 1996:75). Women are increasingly penetrating the professions and further education (UNICEF, 1994). In rural areas, village women without spouses are now, for the first time, allowed to have an equal share of the village land and the exclusive right to use it under the 1994 land proclamation; women are starting to plough their own fields, to sow, thresh, and are actively involved in major crop farming and livestock production, where they were prohibited by custom to do so before (Garforth, 2001).

But the reality of post-independence Eritrea is that the majority of women’s productive work is still un-paid and on the family farm, and education and other opportunities for women are still only open to the urban elite. This shift may partly be due to a post-war backlash against women’s liberation. Much as concerted efforts to get women ‘back to the home’ were made after World War II in Europe and the USA, some commentators have argued that a similar impetus is evident in Eritrea. The disappointing rates of, for example, young women’s enrolment in higher education perhaps reflects the resurgence of traditional ideas about girls’ education affecting their marriage suitability (Smith, 2001; Stefanos, 1997). UNICEF (1994:125) research found that there is plenty of anecdotal evidence that discriminatory practices embedded in customary and religious law often override the new laws protecting women.

### **3.5.3. Women’s roles in rural areas**

So as not to fall into the trap of treating all women as a homogenous group, some other important distinctions must be borne in mind. For example, age, marital status and generational situation within the family create strong distinctions between

women. Typically the three main age and role distinctions are firstly teenagers, who from about 14, are considered of marriageable age; secondly married women with children (a woman over 25 is generally regarded as non-marriageable (Tronvoll, 1998)) and 'older women', typically with grandchildren, who may be anything from 35 years old and upwards.

### 3.5.3.i. Productive roles

Rural Eritrean women's productive lives centre around agriculture, which varies depending on the agro-climatic zone and ethnic group. In the highlands and the western lowlands, women are typically involved with the small-stock (such as chickens and goats) and with field tasks such as cutting, weeding, harvesting, transporting. They are also responsible for managing the products from the farm, such as storing grain and seed and processing grains and legumes by pounding, grinding, sieving and crushing them (UNICEF, 1994).

In the predominantly Muslim herding communities of the lowlands, women may not roam with the livestock, but they do everything else. When the semi-nomadic family settles in an area, the women are the ones who build the *agnet* (portable hut), collect firewood, haul the water, prepare the food, and raise children (Gebremedhin, 1996). They also are responsible for dairy animals, for milking them and making products like butter and ghee (UNICEF, 1994)<sup>22</sup>.

Much of women's productive work is laborious. Agricultural production is largely un-mechanised and depends, for example, on harvesting with sickles and milling grain on stone grinders. Paid employment for women is rare, although mention must be made of traditional midwives who are paid in cash or kind. Other income-generating work for rural women can include beer brewing (in non-Muslim areas), injera-making and sale of eggs, chickens and vegetables from the household farm. UNICEF (1994) points out that rural poverty is such that women rarely consume the high protein

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<sup>22</sup> Due to lack of space, this picture of gender roles in Eritrea cannot be more than broad generalisation. Of course, there are variations in gender roles between ethnic groups and over time, as Rentmeesters points out: 'traditionally among the Tigrinya, men weave and women do not, while among the Rashaida the reverse is true. Among the Tigrinya, housing construction is a male responsibility, while among the Tigre it is a female one. Veiling was nonexistent among Sahel Tigre women 150 years ago and almost all cash income came from sales of women's products. In modern times, Tigre women veil and most cash income comes from men's wage labor and sales of men's products' (Rentmeesters, 1993).

foods they produce on the farm (meat, milk, eggs), preferring to sell them to raise cash.

Men generally control the household budget, having the final say over the spending of any household revenues and controlling the sale of, for example, livestock and cash crops. When it comes to material possessions, such as radio sets, men will generally be the ones who purchase the set and replenish the batteries. As one would expect in a strongly traditional and patriarchal society, men are regarded as heads of families, to have a strong influence over family discipline and the final decision over women and children's movements as well as their education (Tronvoll, 1998).

### 3.5.3.ii. Reproductive Roles

Rural Eritrean women's main work centres around rearing children. As in most poor subsistence-based rural areas, there is a strong desire among most families for high numbers of children<sup>23</sup>, particularly boys; partly to contribute to the labour force, and partly to compensate for those who will inevitably die in infancy. One of the most pervasive difficulties in women's lives is the health problems they constantly face - mainly related to their reproductive roles. The main causes of women's illness and death are obstetric complications, anaemia, malaria, all exacerbated by general inadequate dietary intake, harmful traditional practices (such as FGC, blood-letting, traditional midwifery, nutritional taboos), lack of medical facilities and lack of transport to medical facilities, where they exist (UNICEF, 1994, Almedom et al., 2003)<sup>24</sup>.

Caring for children and the sick, as well as coping with a constant cycle of pregnancies and births themselves, takes up an enormous amount of the average Eritrean woman's time and energy. Children's morbidity and mortality is exceptionally high. A few examples will serve to illustrate this point: the under five mortality rate is 105 per 1,000 live births<sup>25</sup> (UNDP, 2001); severe malnutrition affects

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<sup>23</sup> For instance, in one of the focus groups during the present field-work in Awlietseru village (1996) the women agreed that 'If you are rich it is good to have thirteen [children] but if you are poor five or six is the best number.'

<sup>24</sup> Eritrea has one of the highest reported maternal mortality rates in Africa, being 1,000 deaths per 100,000 live births (UNDP 1997). Furthermore, for women in remote lowland areas such as Barka, a woman's lifetime risk of dying in childbirth are proportionally much higher at a shocking 1 in 12 (UNICEF 1994).

<sup>25</sup> Compared to the World average of 80 (1999 figures)

10 percent of Eritrean children and milder forms resulting in stunted mental and physical growth is evident in one-third of Eritrea's children.

### 3.5.3.iii. Community management roles

Women's community management roles depend on the area and ethnic group. In traditional Christian highland villages women will typically spend much of whatever spare time they have on activities related to the church - often walking many miles to neighbouring villages to observe saints' feast days. Helping to organise and to cook for christenings, funerals and weddings also takes up a lot of time. Other common women's organisations are village women's savings groups which provide an informal insurance scheme as well as an opportunity to socialise over coffee. Muslim women have more limited freedom to move around, but again, they will typically spend much of their spare time in prayer groups and other gatherings related to Islam.

Other such roles relate to the administrative duties at the village level *baito*, many of which now have a small – though significant – proportion of female members. Literacy classes exist in some rural areas for adult women (though, as we shall see, facilities are scarce and the dropout rate is high); nevertheless, attendance at these classes may be added to the list of 'community management' activities for women.

## **3.6. Background on broadcasting**

There is no record of any radio broadcasting in Eritrea during the period of Italian colonialism. When the British took over from the Italians in 1941, the mass propaganda techniques chosen were the scattering of leaflets from the air and the use of loudspeaker announcements (Trevaskis, 1960). The British subsequently permitted 'a measure of free speech and association' (Selassie, 1980:35). The British established a press and information service in the early 1940s, which published and broadcast in English, Tigrinya and Arabic; this consisted mainly of news on the progress of the Second World War in Europe (Selassie 1980:35)

In 1948 an AM service was begun by American Forces based at Radio Marina. This was a strategically important radio listening station established by the USA in Asmara, which subsequently became known as Kagnev Station (Connell, 1993; Johnson, 1996). Its local radio service reached an 80-mile radius around Asmara and, until its closure in 1973, according to Johnson, offered 'easy listening format and news several times a day' (Johnson, 1996).

### *Radio under Ethiopian rule*

In 1953 the journalist Wolde-Ab Wolde-Mariam, an acknowledged founding father of the nationalist movement, was forced into exile, after federation with Ethiopia. In late 1955, in Cairo he founded Radio Free Eritrea, which was the first radio service by Eritreans for Eritreans. According to Gebre-Medhin, this was 'a serious challenge to the [Ethiopian] Crown's ambitions in Eritrea...[since] for almost a decade Radio Free Eritrea became an instrument that united Eritreans for independence against Ethiopian rule' (Gebre-Medhin, 1989). It is not clear how widespread radio ownership in Eritrea was at this stage – it was probably limited to the urban middle-classes. However, radio quickly assumed greater importance, as nationalist feeling grew and the independence war began.

After Emperor Selassie had annexed Eritrea, the Ethiopian Government set up a radio station in Asmara, as part of Radio Ethiopia, in 1967. This broadcast for less than three hours per day in Tigrinya, Tigre and Amharic. A mouthpiece of what was regarded by most Eritreans as the occupying power, it apparently did not generate popular interest, with the exception of its music (Yebio, 1995).<sup>26</sup> Much of the radio infrastructure and journalism training in Ethiopia was provided by aid money during the late 60s and 70s. Thus, by 1986, during the Dergue period, Radio Ethiopia (controlled by the Ministry of Information and National Guidance) had two services and broadcast in nine languages.

Gedamu Abraha, who was, at the time, Senior Adviser at the Ethiopian Ministry of Information and National Guidance, records that in 1986 the Ethiopian Radio Service employed 505 people, of whom 55 were employed at the 'Asmara regional station'.

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<sup>26</sup> However, Janas (1991) asserts that in 1968, the majority of Eritreans (66%) were using Ethiopian stations as an information source and 10% used 'other stations'.

The regional station in Asmara received the 'National Programme' of Radio Ethiopia by microwave links and relayed it on medium wave, and also originated their own local programmes and broadcast three hours of local programmes in regional languages. These were basically 'pro-government programmes for the rebellious North of the country' (Janas, 1991:49). Radio Ethiopia's Home Service broadcast regular weekly programmes of an 'improving' nature for farmers, young people, women, workers, children, soldiers and policemen. These programmes had titles such as 'Self Reliance' 'The Farmer', 'The Worker'. There was a 'Women's Programme' and a 'Women's Forum' in English every week.

Additionally, the Ethiopian authorities set up an Educational Radio service in 1986, broadcasting from Asmara for 8 hrs and 45 minutes per day in Amharic and Tigrinia, and operated by the Ethiopian Ministry of Education (Abraha, 1986). This was in addition to Radio Ethiopia's service, had its own transmitter and frequency, and was (and is still) known as the Educational Mass Media Programme (EMMP). It was formed as part of the Ethiopian effort to educate the rural masses in all of 'greater Ethiopia'. At first the educational programmes were produced in Addis Ababa, but in 1986 the authorities in Addis Ababa decided that production of programmes destined for Eritrean listeners would be moved to Asmara, using Eritrean personnel trained in Ethiopia (K.H., 1996). The EMMP broadcasts consisted of programmes on health, agriculture and politics, the first two being produced in Asmara - the Tigrinia being directly translated from Amharic scripts; while the politics scripts were sent straight from Addis Ababa to ensure that the Dergue's line was upheld (K.H. 1996).

At this stage, the number of radio receivers in Ethiopia (including Eritrea and Tigray) was relatively low. Janas (1991) estimates that in 1986 there were about 6 million, but Abraha (1986) puts the number of receivers lower at 1.5 million sets and, working on the assumption that there were five listeners to every radio set, estimates that in 1986 the audience for Radio Ethiopia was about 7.5 million throughout Ethiopia and its 'regions' (including Eritrea).

### *Beginnings of Dimtsi Haffash*

Meanwhile, in 1979, partly in order to counter Ethiopian propoganda, the EPLF had launched *Dimtsi Haffash* (DH) (The Voice of the Broad Masses of Eritrea) from its

mountain stronghold in the northern province of Sahel. This began as a home-made effort, just after the EPLF's 'Strategic Withdrawal'. In the words of one DH broadcaster:

'Because of the Soviet intervention, the Dergue had all the equipment, weapons, aeroplanes, tanks, countless arms, so it was beyond our [the EPLF's] ability, so we decided to withdraw and start from the beginning. So these events contributed to the start of Dimsti Haffash because we had to tell our people that we still existed. The Dergue were also campaigning that 'the bandits are dismantled, and these rebels' voice is no more, so Eritrean people you better accept the Ethiopians'. So at that time we had to state that the struggle will continue and that we will win!' (W.G. 1996)

At this stage, DH was broadcasting just a few hours a day, 'from a small camping tent, pitched under a tree, with a low-powered transmitter and the most rudimentary equipment' (Yebio, 1995). At the outset DH broadcast six hours a day in Tigrinya, Tigre, Arabic and Amharic (Connell, 1993)<sup>27</sup>. From modest beginnings, DH's transmission power was soon increased, until it reached the neighbouring states of Ethiopia, Somalia, Kenya, Sudan and Saudi Arabia. Eritreans in Saudi Arabia monitored, recorded, transcribed and faxed its programmes to Eritrean communities throughout the world (Yebio, 1995).

By 1989 DH was broadcasting nine hours per day in six languages, including Amharic (Girmatzion, 1993). Within occupied areas of Eritrea, the Ethiopian government made listening to EPLF radio an offence, although this ban was obviously difficult to enforce. In occupied areas news gathered from DH (as well as from international radio such as the BBC, from clandestine meetings, and from EPLF publications) was often passed on through word-of-mouth at weddings, funerals, and in churches and mosques, which were considered safe places for exchanging information (Kidane, 1998).

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<sup>27</sup> According to Kidane, however, it was only on-air at noon and from 5.30 to 7.00pm (Kidane, 1998).

## *Development of Dimtsi Haffash*

Substantial airtime was devoted to cultural, educational and entertainment programmes, as well as to development issues including agriculture, health and the role of women (Simon, 1992). Skits, features, question-and-answer programmes and on-air contests, were among the more imaginative formats that were tried out. Women's emancipation also featured strongly on DH during these war years. In the words of A.I., who was head of Tigrinia programming on DH from 1985 to 1991:

'We weren't allowed to say anything that would belittle women. All the dramas and plays [we produced] put women in a high position... Radio would give examples of good women, for example women doctors, judges, fighters, pharmacists etc. to prove that women's position [was improving under the EPLF]. Radio programmes and the EPLF conscientisers were working in tandem at that time. For example [male] peasants would stop women being elected to the *baitos*, but women would be promoted by the radio and the EPLF conscientisers. This had such effect on the local population – it made women fighters respected. Peasants began to swear on the names of this or that respected woman fighter.'

Issues such as child-marriage, female circumcision and domestic violence were all addressed on-air through various dramas. For example, one drama featured a husband who beats his wife, which provokes her to run off to join the EPLF. On occasion, this feminist slant was criticised by listeners: 'male observers – outsiders – would question this and ask if we were going too far' (A.I., 1996).

Whilst trying to jam each other's broadcasts, and to bomb each other's radio stations, Eritrean forces and the Dergue both used techniques to try to demoralise the enemy over the airwaves. For example, DH used a character called *Eetai Mukur* in a long-running drama in Amharic; she was meant to be an elderly Ethiopian nun, who ridiculed the Dergue's activities. According to Simon (1992) '[this] old nun... captured the popular imagination and whose very words were repeated by the populace in daily conversation.' It was a programme designed to be humorous for Eritreans, but was also meant to demoralise Ethiopian listeners who - it was widely believed - were duped into thinking that this character was a real woman (A.I. 1996).

Another ostensibly humorous programme - but with a serious aim - featured 'Hezbawit and Bekele', an EPLF woman fighter and an Ethiopian soldier, who would meet and discuss on a weekly basis, she telling him of the women's role in the struggle and convincing him of the EPLF's cause (A.I. 1996). The EPLF was particularly proud of the number of soldiers it persuaded to defect to the EPLF from the Ethiopian side and the power of radio was thought to have played an important role in this process (A.I. 1996).

Although *Dimsti Haffash* clearly indulged in a certain amount of propaganda during this period, (it did not, for example, disclose how many EPLF fighters died in the battles), members of the EPLF portray their radio station as a paragon of objective reporting:

'The Front preferred to give the population and its fighters an objective picture of the reality and assiduously avoided extravagant claims and falsification of facts. Cool reasoned analysis rather than bombastic declarations were its strength. This was in stark contrast to Ethiopian propaganda and served to make it [*Dimsti Haffash*] highly credible.' (Simon, H<sup>28</sup>., 1992)

Indeed, the motto of the station was originally, and continues to be: *Kulu Haki n'Haffash* ('all truth to the people'). Notwithstanding some hagiographic pronouncements by the EPLF, it is true to say that *Dimtsi Haffash* built up a solid reputation amongst the local population during the war years, and has become linked in the popular imagination with the struggle, with fighters, victory and independence (Tronvoll, 1996:26).

### *Radio after liberation*

After liberation in 1991, DH moved to Asmara and continued to broadcast to the country (though the staff found that the 'far from modern' studios it had in the mountains were better and bigger than anything the Ethiopians had set up in Asmara (Simon, 1992). The new Ministry of Information (Mol) had many problems related to

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<sup>28</sup> At the time of Simon's address to the seminar on Communication for Development (1992) Hanna Simon was working for the Department of Information and Culture of the Provisional Government of Eritrea, she was later to become Eritrea's ambassador to France.

devastated infrastructure and DH was still using only a 50 kw radio transmitter, with a few, ill-equipped production studios. Lack of training and experience among journalists, who had had little exposure to the profession beyond war journalism, was also a challenge, and for which aid money was sought<sup>29</sup>. Reconstruction and rehabilitation of the broadcasting infrastructure was undertaken, and, partly thanks to aid money from China, a new building for state radio and television was started in 1995.

Naturally, at liberation, the Asmara branch of the EMMP could no longer be controlled by Addis Ababa and the Ethiopian staff left or fled (ERITCOM, 1992). For the following three years, between 1991 and 1994, the EMMP transmitter was used by DH (under the MoI) and the remaining Eritrean staff of the EMMP were dispersed into teaching jobs. Then, in 1995 the Eritrean personnel regrouped and submitted a new proposal, for educational radio for adults (or *Timerti Bradio Na Abeti* as it is known in Tigrinia), to the Ministry of Education (MoE) who agreed to revive the EMMP, using its old transmitter and production facilities in Asmara. The EMMP therefore re-started their programmes, dropping Amharic and adding Tigre to the existing Tigrinia language service, concentrating on the old categories of agriculture, health and politics - though they renamed the political slot 'civics', and changed it fundamentally to reflect the agenda of the new ruling EPLF/PFDJ. The same - mostly lecture-type - formats they had been using under Ethiopian rule were retained (K.H., 1996).

Thus, Eritrea now has two national, government-controlled radio stations: *Dimsti Haffash* and the EMMP. The former provides the larger service (an average of nine hours per day in five languages (Tigrinia, Tigre, Arabic, Afar and Kunama) produced out of the MoI; while the EMMP provides the small, specialised educational service (two languages - Tigrinia and Tigre - for two hours per day, six days per week) out of the MoE<sup>3031</sup>.

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<sup>29</sup> One of the reasons for the researcher's presence in Eritrea in 1995/6 was to provide training to radio journalists, under European Union funding.

<sup>30</sup> See Appendix for a detailed broadcast timetable for both stations.

<sup>31</sup> Television began broadcasting after liberation, on a low-powered transmitter, but now offers a much-expanded satellite-based service. Needless to say, television reaches only a small urban minority and is not a serious rival to radio, which is the mass-medium with the biggest audience.

In terms of radio listeners, there have been no reliable national-level audience surveys, but UNDP estimates that there are 87 radios per a thousand Eritreans (UNDP, 1997)<sup>32</sup>. In the highlands (which are more urbanised and have a better educational average than the lowlands) the proportion of radio-owning households is much higher at up to 82 percent<sup>33</sup> (Office of Schools in Asmara Province, 1996). The researcher's own research in both highland and lowland villages, revealed a 38 percent average of households with radios. Taking into account some degree of sharing and communal listening, it is probably fair to say that 50 to 60 percent of rural people have access to a working radio, either through owning a set or listening to those of others. Anecdotal evidence suggests that independence saw a marked increase in the number of radio-owners because each fighter received 500birr on being demobilised, and many spent this sum on a portable radio set – the most popular being a relatively large Phillips model.

After independence there were various moves to free the airwaves from state control. Commentators in the early 1990s were optimistic about the possibilities for a free and pluralistic broadcast environment for the new state of Eritrea (e.g. Yebio, 1995). The Constitution states that 'Every person shall have the freedom of speech and expression, which includes freedom of the press and other media (Article 19:2)'. But the GoE has retained control of the radio and no private or independent stations are allowed. Nowadays, Eritreans will privately admit that DH 'is not reflecting the talk of the streets' (Anon. 1, 1996)

### **3.7. Education**

Educational levels are low in Eritrea across the board, but adults in particular are ill-served in terms of facilities and opportunities; rural adults even more so than urban ones; and women even more so than men. This section will look at formal education in general (taken to mean both schooling for children and classes for adults), and then specifically at formal education for women and girls, as a back-drop to this study.

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<sup>32</sup> 1994 figures.

<sup>33</sup> This figure is based on a survey of ten villages around Asmara in 1996.

### 3.7.1. History of education

As previously noted, education for ordinary Eritreans was largely neglected during colonial times (Teklehaimanot, 1996). Subsequently, during federation with Ethiopia, very little educational development took place and Eritrean culture began to be undermined by the policy of 'Amharization'. By 1962 all educational decisions were made in Addis Ababa and enrolment figures in Eritrean schools were frozen, while other areas of Ethiopia received expansion funds (Gottesman, 1998). Then under the Dergue not a single new school was built between 1976 and 1991 and by then, only 16 percent of the 381 primary schools were in serviceable condition (UNICEF, 1994).

As the thirty year independence war progressed, the EPLF gradually set up schools for children and classes for adults, such that by 1986 the EPLF's Education Department was administering 125 schools inside Eritrea and the Eritrean Relief Association (ERA) was running nine schools in Eastern Sudan. Literacy classes were extended to about 120,000 adults<sup>34</sup> by 1983/84 (UNICEF, 1994). But the facilities were only available in the liberated zones which, apart from the EPLF 'base area' in the Sahel mountains, were continually changing depending on the advances and retreats of the two sides. Schools and adult classes in the liberated zones were often poorly equipped in terms of textbooks, buildings and furniture, and were targets for repeated Ethiopian bombardment, and, furthermore, were severely interrupted by the drought and famine of 1984/85 (UNICEF, 1994). Thus, education for the bulk of the Eritrean population during the independence war was a piece-meal affair and often a highly dangerous experience. Meanwhile, those who found themselves under the Ethiopian administration received education which promoted the Amharic culture and language, but was resisted by both pupils and teachers – many of whom were forced out of their jobs or into exile (UNICEF, 1994). It is no wonder, therefore, that educational levels at independence (1993) were pitifully low, with adult literacy standing at only 20% for men and 10% for women, and primary school enrolment at only 26 percent of all primary school-age children (UNICEF, 1994).

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<sup>34</sup> Gottesman (1998) has a lower figure of 56,000 as the number of adults reached by the 'National Literacy Campaign' undertaken by the EPLF, of whom 60 percent were women.

### 3.7.2. The EPLF approach to education

Since the present-day policy-makers of the GOE have their roots firmly in the 'freedom struggle' and in the philosophy of the EPLF, it is worth looking briefly at the EPLF approach to education during the independence war. The EPLF undertook the task of education with typical zeal. "Illiteracy is our main enemy" was among the movement's first slogans (Gottesman, 1998). Early on, the aim was to make all fighters – of whom most were originally farmers and unskilled workers – literate. This was achieved by 1972, many fighters receiving classes for up to six hours a day, including during minor battles (Gottesman, 1998).

By 1974, and the virtual cessation of the civil war against the ELF, the EPLF turned its attention to the wider populace and started the 'Zero School'<sup>35</sup> in Sahel province, a boarding school for orphans, refugees, and children of fighters (Gottesman, 1998). Although it began literally at 'zero' with no school supplies, no curriculum and about ten inexperienced teachers, this was to become the EPLF's proto-type for a national school system, and its graduates played a significant role in opening schools in other parts of the country and in teaching rural people how to read and write (Pateman, 1990). By 1983 the Zero School had over 3,000 pupils (Gottesman, 1998) and taught a wide range of subjects including Tigrinya, Tigre, Arabic and English and, crucially, for the building of nationhood, the geography and history of Eritrea.

#### *Adult education*

The National Literacy Campaign began in 1983, with the despatch of 599 Zero School students and teachers into the countryside to serve as teachers (Gottesman, 1998). This was the EPLF's concerted effort at widening out its education programme to rural adults *en masse*, though it had always included non-formal education in the 'service' it extended to anyone falling under its direct aegis, such as patients in its hospitals, workers in its workshops or prisoners of war (Pateman, 1990).

Despite its commitment to the idea, the EPLF acknowledged that this big push for basic education in the rural areas would be a struggle:

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<sup>35</sup> Sometimes referred to as the 'Revolutionary School'.

‘Economic insecurity, cultural backwardness, illiteracy, the peasant’s unabating bulk of work, cruel exploitation, along with the subtle influences of the religious and spiritual world, had such an effect on the mentality of the peasants that the technique to be applied in the process of political education and dialogue with the masses was bound to be problematic, long, repetitive and demanding of great patience.’ (*Creating a popular economic, political and military base* EPLF, 1982 quoted in Wilson, 1991:118)

The aim was ‘a) to eradicate illiteracy and b) raise the peasants’ consciousness’ (Gottesman, 1998) and comprised an all-round basic curriculum of reading, writing, arithmetic, hygiene, sanitation and health. It was a three-year program, the completion of which was equivalent to completing grade five of the elementary school curriculum.

However, this was no conventional approach to education; the literacy teachers also participated in agriculture and other rural and traditional skills - including midwifery - in rural communities (Gottesman, 1998). The approach taken seems to have been a highly participatory one, whereby the ‘teachers’ (mostly young secondary school students) were expected to learn about the rural way of life, and *from* the people of the communities they were stationed in, as well as teaching them what they knew. Gottesman (1998) lauds the radical nature of this two-way kind of educational experience, and calls it ‘communicative praxis’. For him, this is summed up by a former literacy teacher who told him:

‘Even though they [the people] are illiterate, even though they can’t write and read, they were very experienced people... They were a *hundred* times teaching us than we were teaching them’ (Abraham Bahre, quoted in Gottesman, 1998:182).

Another feature of the programme was, of course, political education, some of which had elements of social engineering to it: for example, Connell quotes Askalu Menkerios in 1976<sup>36</sup>:

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<sup>36</sup> Menkerios was later to become the first woman elected to the EPLF Central Committee and became the head of the NUEW.

'We tell them how the Italians the British, and the Ethiopians have used our differences to their advantage...We have also relocated some of the families [in the liberated zone] to mix people of various nationalities with each other. The more you put them together, the more they lose their prejudices. They had completely different cultures when they came here [a displaced persons' camp in the liberated zone], but now they're beginning to share a single one' (quoted in Connell, 1993:37).

As well as social engineering, there was a certain amount of coercion evident in the literacy campaign. For instance, Gottesman (1998) records the fact that the EPLF would, in some cases, take 'disciplinary action' against civilians if they refused to attend literacy classes. But he defends this approach, saying

'Compulsory education is based in part on the same rationale that... children will later be grateful for what they are compelled to learn now. Applied to newly-literate adults, it's likely to prove even more quickly true: they will become advocates of literacy' (1998:213).

### **3.7.3. Education in Eritrea today**

Today, the GoE has made primary schooling free and compulsory. There are increasing enrolment figures for each level of education (primary, secondary and higher), and there is a strong push on adult literacy, with a particular focus on women, the government being mindful of the gap in adult literacy between the sexes (World Bank Group, 2003).

In the adult education programmes run by both the Min of Education and the NUEW the overwhelming majority of attendees are women (Gebremedhin, 2002). Classes are quite formal, and typically follow three six-month courses of six days per week, with six month breaks in between. The courses focus primarily on basic literacy and numeracy, with a little attention to hygiene, sanitation and agriculture. Teachers in the MoE's classes are primary teachers – both male and female, and the NUEW teachers are women who have completed primary school and 4-5 days of training (UNICEF, 1994). There are various problems with these literacy classes, the major

one being lack of resources (Ministry of Education<sup>a</sup>, 1995). Figures for the whole country show that in 1994/95 only 2,137 adults were reached by the programme. Teaching materials are scarce: as UNICEF remarks, 'literacy readers are rare, though teachers usually have one'(UNICEF 1994:105). Attracting women to these classes has been difficult and dropout rates are high. In some areas, as an incentive, 2kg bags of sugar have been given for each month that a woman attends a class<sup>37</sup> (UNICEF, 1994). It is to these classes that the EMMP radio programmes are explicitly linked, as shall be examined in more detail in Chapter 6.

Wide differentials between the sexes persist in educational attainment. Estimates at independence (1993) showed that double the number of men were literate compared with women. This is due to a combination of factors, beginning at the family level, at which boys are given priority for schooling, and education for girls is viewed as a waste of resources (Gebremedhin, 1996; UNICEF, undated; World Bank Group, 2003). Other obstacles include shortage of schools in general, which means that distances to be travelled to the nearest school are high, especially in the secondary grades (World Bank Group, 2003); lack of sanitary facilities for girls in schools is another off-putting factor, as is the real or perceived danger of sexual violence. There is a marked difference between urban and rural schooling, where 79% of children in urban areas attend school, whereas only 24% attend in the country (Somavia, 2000)<sup>38</sup>. The gender gap is also marked in relation to ethnic groupings. According to MOE figures for 1997, whereas 89% of Tigrinia girls attend school, only 34% of Tigre girls attend (cited in Gebremedhin, 2002:79). The situation is even more difficult for girls from nomadic and semi-nomadic families, since regular attendance at school is almost impossible, due to their families' constant movement. Furthermore, limited positive role models, in terms of female school teachers and other professionals, contribute to girls' underachieving compared with boys, even when they do get to school (World Bank Group, 2003).

#### **3.7.4. Issues in Education**

One of the central issues in education today is one of curricula – for both adults and children. This has a bearing not only on formal education but on non-formal means

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<sup>37</sup> The researcher witnessed this 'food aid in exchange for study' phenomenon on a visit to Foro in 1995.

<sup>38</sup> This is the highest urban/rural divide in the world (Somavia, 2000)

such as education via radio. At independence the primary school curriculum in use was still largely that which the EPLF developed in 1982 during the armed struggle. In many ways this reflected the EPLF's interest in an analysis of 'the oppressor and the oppressed' as well as an emphasis on the practical skills for rural community life (UNICEF, 1994). But now there is a basic tension between preparing learners with practical skills for rural community life and preparing them with academic skills for work in the modern economy (UNICEF 1994).

Another problem is a widespread lack of motivation and a negative view of the educational experience, particularly among adults and those sections of the population who grew up largely under Ethiopian rule and who associate schooling with suppression of Eritrean culture, language and identity; teachers who were suspected of collaboration with the Ethiopian authorities; and schools which were ill-equipped and badly maintained (UNICEF, 1994). The task of attracting poor and overworked adult farmers - especially women with young children - to literacy classes, remains a difficult one. As noted, the EPLF has in the past used various techniques, ranging from coercion to incentives like handing out sugar rations, to attract students.

Standards of education in schools, and the subsequent reinforcement and maintenance of acquired skills, are also a cause for concern. For instance, in a survey of 360 women from the Western Lowlands in 1993-94, '99 percent had not finished enough formal schooling to be permanently literate and numerate' (UNICEF, 1994). Even among EPLF fighters educational levels are not particularly high, despite efforts to educate all EPLF cadres: according to a 1993 study of women fighters, 75 percent of them had not proceeded beyond Grade 5 – the threshold for literacy – and 90 percent not beyond Grade 9 – the threshold for skilled employment (UNICEF, 1994).

A further issue is one of control and agenda-setting by government versus local communities. For instance, after independence a major national debate began about which language medium to use in elementary schools. Some schools in ethnic minority areas stated a preference for English or Arabic as a medium, rather than their mother-tongue, arguing that to be literate in mainstream languages was more useful. The government, however, responded with the blanket implementation of the

mother-tongue policy, arguing for the need to retain and encourage minority languages and that mother-tongue literacy-learning is easier for beginners (see Pool 2001).

### **3.7.5. Information Provision**

Rural Eritreans receive developmental information and news about happenings beyond their immediate locality from a limited set of sources. These include unofficial sources like word of mouth (market-place talk, news from relatives outside the village, and so on) and more traditional sources such as the church or mosque. Almost everything else emanates from some section of the government - NGOs and other structures of civil society such as a free press, being almost non-existent. Apart from the radio and local extension officials from ministries such as health and agriculture, who provide a certain amount of personal input, the main way in which the GOE communicates with the Eritrean population is through mass public meetings.

These meetings hark back to the methods adopted by the EPLF in liberated zones during the independence war, whereby whole villages would be summoned to debate and agree on major issues, with the meetings sometimes lasting all night (Silkin, 2003). These were normally led by EPLF cadres on issues such as land reform, women's rights or neo-colonialism, and would invariably end with the adoption of predetermined resolutions, which accorded with the EPLF view. Now, these kinds of meetings are usually convened through *baitos*, often by using town- (or village-) criers. Government agencies like the Ministries of Health, Agriculture, the NUEW and the police-force now use this method regularly to explain and raise the public's awareness on issues ranging from the need for terracing and reforestation, to family planning, the new Constitution, and the need to bury rubbish and protect wells. Often these meetings are extremely large: in one of this study's survey villages, Awlietseru, the average audience size is reportedly about 200 people, but near Kuandaba, up to 6,000 people reportedly attend some meetings.

One of the advantages of the public meeting format from the GoE's point of view is that it enables local and central government to retain some degree of control over the extent of participation and debate, where deemed necessary. The grassroots

consultation about the new Constitution is a case in point. This consisted of a series of seminars and public meetings across the country. One view is that these were forums for unique political information and serious debate at the grassroots level. However, 'segments of the intelligentsia' were more sceptical and believed that, far from allowing genuine questions to be raised about issues such as national languages and presidential elections, the process was simply 'a civic education campaign' (Pool, 2001). Furthermore Pool highlights what the GoE has chosen to communicate through public meetings and what it has not. For instance, he points out that the sensitive re-drawing of provincial boundaries in the highlands in 1994, which aimed partly to break down traditional regionalist sentiments and mix different ethnic groups, was not the subject of public meetings.

### **3.8. Conclusion**

In this final section the salient points about the Eritrean context are drawn together and related to the subject of the study: broadcasting and women's education and development.

The survey of the history and socio-political situation of Eritrea gives an overall picture of extreme poverty, suffering and upheaval. Eritrea is, in effect, a classic example of a developing country which has lost several development decades due to war. This has resulted in severe challenges in all sectors: particularly health, education, infrastructure, status of women, and the overall economy. Although it is a truism, it is worth stating that everything is therefore a priority for the GoE. Broadcasting must be considered against a backdrop of this requirement to satisfy basic needs first; remembering that scarcity of resources is the constant refrain.

Another defining theme of contemporary Eritrean culture is the heavy influence of the EPLF (now renamed the PFDJ), whose influence extends – to a certain extent - right down to village level. The fact that most of the individuals in government were either fighters or grew up under the aegis of the EPLF, shapes the approach taken in Eritrea to broadcasting, education and women's issues. One example of what this implies in practice is the retention of control over broadcasting by the government. The origins of this need for control are aptly summed up by Pateman:

'The leaders of the PFDJ spent most of their formative years in an organisation that worked on the principle of democratic centralism. Matters were discussed at great length before the leadership took decisions, but once decisions were made, everyone was expected to toe the line. It will take many years before the leadership learns to deal with dissent in an easy and fair fashion.' (Pateman, 1998:268)

Finally, the influence of tradition cannot be forgotten. Eritrea remains an extremely traditional society, the influence of the EPLF notwithstanding. This strong vein of conservatism affects the way broadcasting, education and women's issues are being shaped in Eritrea today. Although the social, educational, agricultural, infrastructural and gender gains of the EPLF are much celebrated (see Firebrace and Holland 1986; Connell 1993; Wilson 1991), the fact remains that these did not reach the rural majority in any consistent or sustained way. The continued prevalence, across all areas of the country, of strong religious observance, of the practice of FGM, of male dominance in public life, traditional patterns of land tenure<sup>39</sup>, high rates of adult illiteracy and so on, show that life for the majority of the rural people has remained deeply traditional and relatively untouched by the reforms of the EPLF or of its offshoots such as the NUEW. As Tronvoll argues, this perhaps can be explained by the exigencies of survival, such that, Eritrean rural society has *had* to cling to its customary ways of life, 'for predictability and familiarity during times of turbulence, adhering to the prescribed norms of action within the traditional social system' (1998:263).

### *Contrasts and Tensions within society*

Taking all the above defining factors into account, Eritrea's recent history can be said to have produced a set of important contrasts and tensions as well as widening differentials in contemporary society. One of the most obvious tensions is the wide diversity that has always existed in Eritrea in terms of ethnic and religious

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<sup>39</sup> On land tenure, Pateman (1990) points out that only a third of Eritrea's villages had undertaken reform or redistribution by 1987.

composition. This is enormously important to politics, society and culture. As various commentators have noted, the fear of ethnic and religious fragmentation remains close to the surface of most discussions of development in Eritrea (Connell, 2002; Pool 2001).

Another clear contrast is a great divide between urban and rural life, which the statistics illustrate<sup>40</sup>. The fact that being urban also correlates with being schooled and materially better-off, means that the difference between life in the capital, Asmara, and life in the rural areas is vast. The fact that broadcasters are based in Asmara, very rarely move out of the city, are educated and are salaried, has consequences for their relationship with their largely rural audience.

Yet another contrast in Eritrean society is the fighter/non-fighter divide. These differences between ex-fighters and non-fighters are tangible, from their styles of dress<sup>41</sup>, from their life histories, by their expectations and outlooks; all of which can be roughly summed up as progressive versus conservative. Among those who are schooled, it is possible to discern a difference between those brought up under Ethiopian rule and those who received their schooling in the 'liberated areas': the former system having been conformist, Amharic-based and highly biased against 'the EPLF bandits'; and the latter having been radical, Marxist, feminist and analytical. To some extent, these fighter/non-fighter differences are reflected in the two radio stations: *Dimtsi Haffash* and the educational channel (EMMP). The former is more reflective of EPLF philosophy and is more innovative and more challenging of customary practices (such as FGM), while the EMMP is more traditional, safe, and theoretical in its output. It is no accident that *Dimtsi Haffash* was started by and is still staffed by fighters, whereas the EMMP, though it employs some fighters, was started under the Ethiopians and is staffed mainly by Eritreans who were trained in Ethiopia.

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<sup>40</sup> Eritrea is, roughly speaking, 20 percent urban versus 80 percent rural - which correlates strongly with the educated/uneducated divide. One only needs to look at the figures (above) on children's school attendance in urban versus rural areas to appreciate this vast gulf.

<sup>41</sup> This evidence is purely based on observation, but it is noticeable that in Asmara male ex-fighters – even in high government posts - habitually wear anoraks, and generally cultivate a very informal look, whereas non-fighters wear jackets, and generally look more formal. Among women, trousers are much more common for women ex-fighters than for non-fighters.

On gender issues and women's status, Eritrea's recent past has resulted in a contrast between the progressive gender policies for which the EPLF justly received international attention, and the lives of the majority of rural women, which continue almost unchanged, and subject to patriarchal norms. As Pool puts it: '[women's issues are] a barometer of the broader contest between forces of change and conservatism' (Pool, 2001:182).

## Chapter 4: Methodology

### 4.1. Introduction

This chapter describes and justifies the methodology used to carry out this case-study of Eritrea, which builds up an in-depth, evidence-based picture of broadcasters, the rural female audience, and the educational and developmental radio programmes which are being produced and consumed. Based on the Maletzke (1963) model, this methodology is structured around the questions which need to be asked as to the influences and determining factors on each side *vis a vis* the broadcasters (in Maletzke, 'C' for communicator), the rural women listeners ('R' for receiver) and the programmes themselves ('M' for message).

A case-study approach was chosen in order to fill the gap that seems to exist in terms of the research evidence on the production and consumption of educational and developmental radio for rural women. Yin (2003:41) says that one of the justifications for a single case study is the representative or typical case, the objective being to 'capture the circumstances and conditions of an everyday or commonplace situation.' It is argued that the circumstances surrounding educational broadcasting in Eritrea present a case typical of much of the developing world, and certainly of Africa, in which the state broadcaster dominates, where structures are centralised and communicators in ministerial departments are tasked with providing educational and developmental messages for the benefit of the rural population. It is suggested that it is therefore possible to draw conclusions from this case-study which are applicable to other countries in Africa.

Since the focus is on the behaviour and perspectives of each side of the communication equation (broadcasters and audience), a method had to be chosen which would foreground their points of view, but which would also allow a means to cross-check information and to analyse and interpret the data gathered. Qualitative data-collection methods privilege the views of the subjects of a study, relying as they do on: in-depth interviewing, document analysis and unstructured observations (Jensen & Jankowski, 1991). However, because events and processes are to be viewed from different angles, and an interface is being studied, there is also a necessity for triangulation of findings. Therefore some quantitative methods are also used so as not to rely just on what people said and on subjective observations, but, for example, to check on percentages of radio-ownership and to build up patterns regarding the way women listened and to which programmes. This combination of qualitative and quantitative data collection methods is perfectly consistent with a case-study approach, which often encompasses one or more small-scale surveys, thereby building up multiple sources of evidence, to converge on a set of conclusions which are convincing and accurate (Yin, 2003).

## **4.2. Research methods**

A mix of research strategies was employed, both qualitative and quantitative. The methods used were:

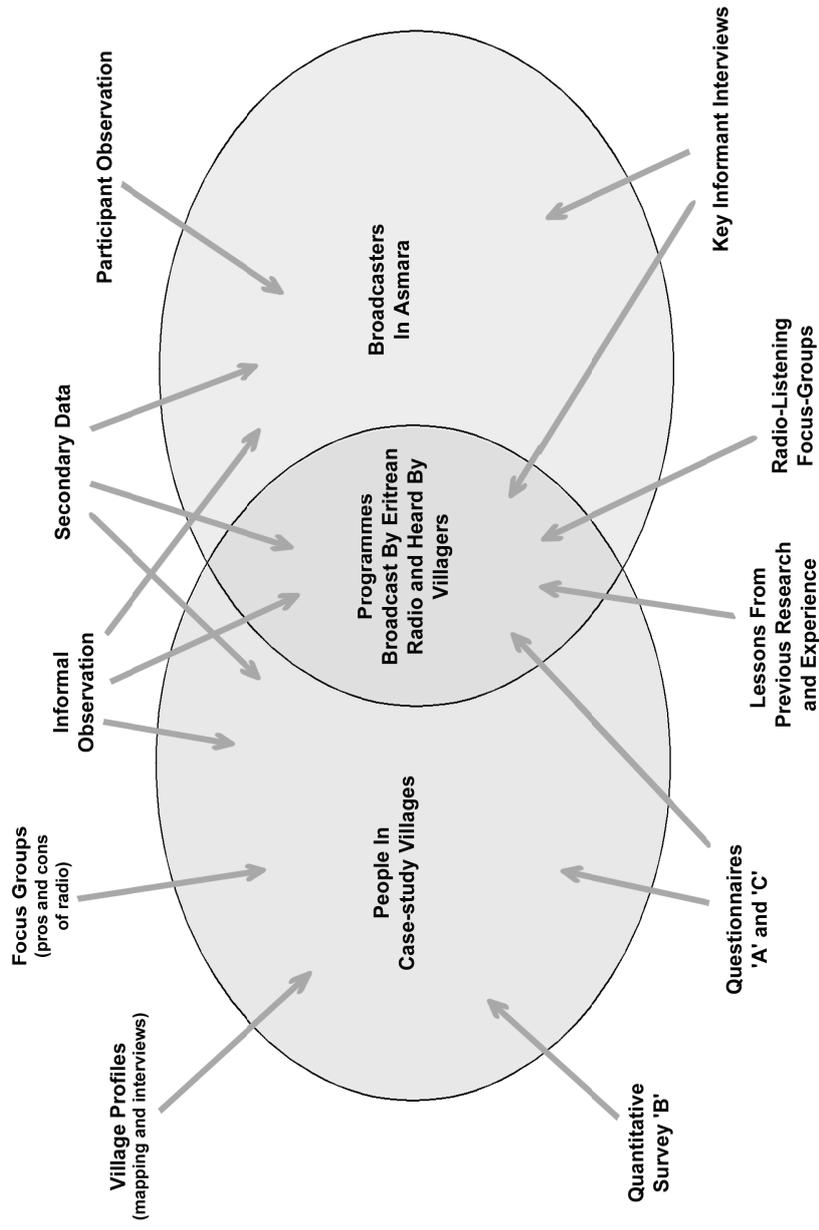
- in-depth interviews with key-informants,
- focus-group discussions,
- participant and informal observation.
- a standardised questionnaire with randomly selected informants in four case-study villages to obtain a picture of listening patterns (survey A: 41 women from radio owning households)
- a straight-forward house-to-house survey to ascertain numbers of radio-owners in each the four case-study village (survey B covering all 656

households in the four case-study villages)

- another random survey on responses to a specific radio campaign in 12 other highland villages (survey C covering 72 men and women)
- some elements of experimentation were also incorporated in the study, whereby radio-listening focus-groups were set up artificially, to test different groups' reaction to the same radio programme.

The quantitative methods complemented the qualitative data and were consistent with an inductive approach in which: 'data collection and data analyses go on in concurrent and integrated steps that build on one another' (Guba, E. p. xiv in Erlandson et. al. 1993) (The survey questionnaires are set-out in the Appendices.)

In summary, the study is structured as an inductive case-study, using a methodological mix of qualitative and quantitative techniques. The following diagram (Fig. 2) illustrates the physical and conceptual areas in which the different data-gathering techniques were used and shows the links between them.



**Fig. 2: Venn Diagram of Research Methods**

### 4.2.1. Research Questions

Before describing and critiquing the methods used, it is necessary to set out the areas which the research questions covered, and show how these emanate from Maletzke's model (refer Fig 1, Chapter 1). It is to be noted that the term 'question' refers to two levels of questioning: those questions asked in interviews, focus groups and so on, and those asked of the case as a whole, in other words, those which, in essence, are the researchers' reminders regarding the information that needs to be collected and why (Yin, 2003). Moreover, as the proceeding paragraphs demonstrate, triangulation was attempted throughout: no single research question was answered by using a single method, and almost every area of investigation was addressed by a variety of means.

Starting on the right side of the model, with the receivers, rural Eritrean women's 'image of radio and of broadcasters' was investigated by asking various questions around trust, what they see as the advantages and disadvantages of radio; and about what factors form their attitudes towards radio in general, and towards educational and developmental programming in particular. In terms of the 'selection from media content', questions were posed as to women's typical listening patterns, channel and programme preferences. In terms of 'effect from and experience of content', questions were formulated around women's responses to programmes and in relation to their expectations, pleasures, criticisms, increased knowledge, and any behaviour changes. Issues around comprehension and usability of information were also explored. On 'pressures or constraints from the medium' itself, the issue of engaging with the technology of radio was investigated. In relation to the 'receiver as a member of the audience', patterns were explored on radio ownership and control within the household and the extent to which this is gendered; also on the places and forums in which radio listening is done (e.g. Listening Centres) and on ways radio fits into daily life and with other information sources. Wherever possible, general patterns were contrasted with those of men, and care was taken to differentiate

between women of different age-groups. From the responses to these questions emerged issues pertaining to individuals' 'self-image' and their 'social environment'. Maletzke's 'personality structure of receiver' category was not one that was investigated, as the study was not concerned with the psychology of the individual receiver, but with the group – rural Eritrean women.

On the left side of Maletzke's model, the core activity by broadcasters is the 'selection and structuring of content;' every other factor feeds into that activity. So, in order to analyse this process, questions were formulated and observations made around the nature of broadcasters' working conditions, technical constraints and routine programme-making practice which corresponded to Maletzke's categories of 'the communicator's working team', 'pressure from the medium' and 'pressure from the message'. The extent of 'spontaneous feedback from the receivers' was an area easily discerned through observation. For an understanding of 'broadcasters' image of receivers,' questions were formulated around how broadcasters' views were reflected in programmes, the quality and quantity of their experience *vis à vis* rural women, and about gender issues in general. Much of the research with broadcasters revolved around the categories of 'working team' and 'organisation': these included investigating and observing the differences between the two radio stations, EMMP and DH, and broadcasters' interpretations of their organisational mandates. It also involved finding ways of exploring questions of ideology, policy and politics – done mainly obliquely through interviews, but also through secondary sources and other key-informants. 'Self-image' was an important category which is investigated in this research, not as pertaining to individuals (therefore again leaving aside Maletzke's category of 'personality structure') but pertaining to broadcasters as a group, and looking at their view of what being an educational/developmental broadcaster means in their context. Questioning and reflecting on the constraints and the responsibilities of government control is done in response to Maletzke's invitation to examine the 'pressures and constraints caused by the public character of

the medium'. A view of 'broadcasters' social environment' was explored through interviewing and observations.

The following sections describe and critique the methods used in the research. After a discussion about the issues of observation and research assistance, which influenced the whole study, the methods are presented roughly in the chronological order in which they were undertaken.

#### **4.2.2. Observation**

Observation was central to gaining an understanding of broadcasting in Asmara, as well as of listening patterns at the village level (see Fig. 2). Observations made during some of the researcher's previous work in Eritrea and elsewhere in Africa also inform the study.

Observation, particularly participant observation, is a cornerstone of qualitative research approaches. Marshall and Rossman (1989) define observation as "the systematic description of events, behaviours and artifacts in the social setting chosen for study" (quoted in Erlandson et.al. 1993:94). Erlandson et al. point out there is a range of observations from 'very focused' to 'unstructured' with the latter more appropriate to the early stages of an inquiry. This less-structured type of observation was used to define the parameters of this study and to discern that which was most salient. For example, by observing the context in which the Eritrean broadcasters worked; their office layout, their educational resources, their access to (or lack of) vehicles, studio space, recording equipment, and so on, it was possible to develop research questions pertinent to the study. Again, in the villages, observing patterns of radio listening by gender and age, noticing the kinds of people who owned radios and listening to the sorts of programmes they were tuned to; all these were data for the study.

Observation of broadcasters in Asmara was possible because the researcher was working as facilitator and coordinator of training and research on radio in Eritrea for intermittent periods amounting to about eight months in total between 1994 and 1996. Being in Eritrea for work in association with the EMMP, the researcher was a privileged observer within the Ministry of Education (MoE): between October 1995 and April 1996 almost daily visits were made to the offices of the EMMP. The researcher organised and facilitated two training courses on 'message development' for EMMP and DH radio producers. The researcher also organised computer training for EMMP staff and coordinated the distribution of a shipment of clockwork radios among rural listeners. These activities allowed insights into the producers' and managers' daily routine, methods of work, organisational and resource problems as well as aspirations and pressures. It also enabled access to rural areas and contact with listeners, both in and out of the company of broadcasters.

#### **4.2.3. Potential problems with participant observation**

To what extent and to what effect this privileged observer position was one of *participant* observer requires some discussion. The fact that the researcher was on the one hand involved with training broadcasters and helping them research their subjects, and on the other hand concurrently observing broadcasters and their rural listeners in order to study them, raises a number of issues.

##### *Ethics*

Firstly, there is the question of ethics. Was it right to work closely with, while at the same time to study, the Eritrean broadcasters? The researcher cannot make a final judgement on this, but can only state that she was explicit about carrying out research. The broadcasters were aware that data was being collected about them at the same time as they were being trained.

## *Objectivity*

Secondly there is the question of objectivity. Patton says:

" The challenge is to combine participation and observation so as to become capable of understanding the experience as an insider while describing the experience for outsiders." (Patton, 1987:75)

It is this challenge of combining participant and observer that raises problems of objectivity and bias. The problem can be illustrated by two examples from the field:

At the village level, the main reason the researcher and her assistant were given permission by the authorities to carry out house-to-house interviews was because authorisation was carried from the MoE. Therefore most interviewees and village authorities probably perceived us as 'from the radio', and may have slanted their answers accordingly, possibly over-emphasising the importance of radio in their lives. In Asmara, while interviewing broadcasters it was noticed that those broadcasters who had participated in workshops run by the researcher gave responses that they may have thought would please the researcher by, for example, emphasising the importance of drama, having previously attended several training sessions run by the researcher on that very subject.

The challenge is to strike a balance between the advantages of insight and the dangers of bias. As Erlandson et al. opine:

'The dangers of bias and reactivity are great; the dangers of being insulated from relevant data are greater.' (Erlandson et al. 1993:15)

### *Duration*

Thirdly, there is the question of duration. Participant observation, stemming from the anthropological tradition, is associated with prolonged periods of immersion in the culture being observed. Is it possible to be a participant observer without spending years of immersion? Patton (1987:79) makes the point that length of time is dependent on the nature of the questions being studied and points out that:

" The extent of participation is a continuum which varies from complete immersion in the program as full participant to complete separation from the activities observed, taking on a role of spectator." (Patton 1987:74)

The extent of the researcher's immersion is somewhere mid-way along that continuum. Through running the workshops, the researchers' involvement with educational radio broadcasting was sufficient to gain privileged access to informants, and not sufficient to claim the sort of in-depth understanding gained by some anthropologists. One of the main reasons for this lies in language.

### *Language*

The question of language in relation to participant observation is crucial. Unfortunately, unless the observer is fluent in the language(s) used, full observation using every faculty is not possible. If, as in this study, the researcher has only a basic understanding of the local languages (in this case the languages of Tigrinia and Tigre) and relies on an interpreter/research assistant for most interactions, observational insights are very much diminished because translation through an interpreter is often not possible at the moment of observation. Indeed the presence of an intermediary at these moments would negate the whole endeavour of being a

participant observer. Patton asserts:

‘Observers must learn the language of the participants in the program they are observing and record that language and its patterns in order to represent participants in their own terms and be true to the world view of participants.’  
(1987:87)

But for most researchers investigating an issue in a foreign country this is simply not possible, though it seems the problem is rarely documented in any detail (Mikkelsen 1995). It is therefore acknowledged that because of lack of language skills effective observation was not wholly possible and true participant observation was precluded.

In conclusion, observation was important to the study, both in its design and its implementation. In-depth participant observation was not a goal, neither was it achievable given limitations on time and language. Nevertheless the fact of working within part of the radio structure under investigation does constitute a degree of participation, and the advantages and disadvantages of this position have been acknowledged.

#### **4.2.4. Research Assistance**

An Eritrean woman called W. was recruited as the main research assistant and an Eritrean man named D. was employed to help with the quantitative survey (survey B). These two were more than just translators; they became *interpreters* of meaning and of the culture that those languages express.

They were also very significant filters of information, to the detriment of the quality of that information. This is due to the nature of the process itself (and is not meant to reflect badly on the individual research assistants involved). Richness is necessarily

lost as information is passed through the interpretation process. In an interview situation, some of the richness can be re-injected through discussion and negotiation of meaning between researcher and interpreter/ research assistant immediately after the session. But nuances of language (tone, imagery, accent, asides, jokes etc.) can never be fully appreciated by the researcher who is not fluent in the language being used.

### *Influence of research assistants*

This often means that the conduct of the research process itself is influenced by the research assistant. Two contrasting situations offer examples. In the first, a group interview was being held with some mothers in the village of Kuandaba during which W. chose to offer me an aside: “they say they are getting tired and want to go home to their children”, at which she and I agreed to cut the discussion short and steer the meeting to a close. The second instance took place in the village of Gahtelay where we were asking a group of men to listen and comment on a radio programme about adolescence. W. heard one of the men mutter “What’s the use of this stupid programme?”. However, she chose not to translate this remark to me during the course of the discussion, preferring instead to translate the more neutral responses the men were giving her, which were that “the programme was clear and easy to understand”. By doing this W. ensured the uninterrupted flow of the meeting, whilst remembering to communicate the comment to me afterwards. But by doing so she precluded the possibility of deeper discussion about what the men really felt about the programme.

### *Process*

The dynamics between researcher and research-assistant are multi-layered but much depends on trust and shared intuitive feelings about the situation at hand. In the present case, the relationship was a good one, both friendly and professional. The working methods varied depending on what format of enquiry was being used.

In discussion situations W. would have 'free-rein' to facilitate the discussion as she wished; translating back at intervals so as not to disrupt the free-flow of discussion between herself and the interviewee. During the administration of questionnaires, the process was slightly more controlled. The process was typically as follows: W. had a blank copy of the questionnaire in English and I had a sheaf of them on my writing pad. She would progress through the questionnaire by framing each question in the appropriate language and dialoguing a little with the respondent to ensure comprehension until she obtained what she judged was a satisfactory response. She would translate this response back to me in English, and I noted it while she proceeded with the next question in the local language. If I felt a response was unusual or interesting I would note it and then ask W. to elicit a clarification or expansion from the respondent before proceeding on to the next question.

### *Background on research assistants*

The use of assistants clearly risks biases due to differences in cultural norms and interpretations and by their personal histories and specialisations (Mikkelson 1995; Chambers 1983). In order, therefore, to lay some of these biases open, some background and detail about the two research assistants, W. and D., involved with the present study are given. This will serve two purposes: firstly, to afford the reader a glimpse down the lens through which the data gathered was analysed and interpreted; and secondly to emphasise the point that research assistance is felt to be intrinsic to methodology, meriting discussion within this, the main text, as opposed to relegation to acknowledgements or appendices.

The term 'assistant' is used reluctantly for want of a better term. W. was at once companion, linguistic interpreter, cultural interpreter, and analyst; she was also an informant in her own right. Given that the main respondents at the village level were women, it was felt necessary to have a female assistant. She had to be patient and flexible; at ease in English, Tigrinia and Tigre; someone with some previous experience of interviewing and group discussions in rural settings and someone who

positively liked working in rural areas. W. fulfilled all these requirements, and more. W's particular experience also includes a Masters degree in rural development from and a long history as a 'fighter' with the EPLF. D. had a smaller, but nevertheless important, role in the research as the main enumerator for the quantitative survey (B) described below. With a degree in economics, D. has several years survey and rural research experience with NGOs, governmental, and UN bodies.

Brief biographical details are not sufficient to convey the personalities, influences and outlooks of the people in question. But to give too many personal details would be undesirable and sensitive. Suffice it to signal the main aspects of their personas which may have affected - or, indeed biased - the research. In W.'s case, it is her background as a woman fighter which is perhaps most significant. This made interviewees both respectful and wary of her. On the whole, ex-fighters command considerable respect in contemporary Eritrea but attitudes vary between communities, depending on those communities' experience of the war and their ethnic and political affiliations. Fighters are popular heroes, but they are also the new masters. They embody the EPLF - now in effect the government - and some people are naturally cautious about expressing opinions in their presence, particularly considering that the radio is, and is seen to be, a government organ. Fighters who are women have a particularly ambiguous status; as W. herself said: "The village women who were not fighters thought that we were not proper women because we wore trousers and were more outspoken." During the research W. tried to emphasise the things she had in common with the village women such as having children. However, there was still a tangible difference between her and the 'ordinary' women.

D.'s role in the research was to gather quantitative data about numbers of radio-owning households in each of the four case-study villages (survey B). The fact that, like W., he was seen as representing the government, affected the conduct of the survey itself both positively and negatively. It was positive in that cooperation was

elicited from village authorities. It was negative on at least one occasion when D. found that a significant number of households from one of the villages (Gahtelay) had moved away temporarily to follow their cattle to better pastures, but could not follow them for fear of security problems, government officials having recently been targets of attacks in that area.

Both W. and D. brought their own perspectives to the work and helped in its analysis. They must also be acknowledged as key informants. Whether or not they biased the research is a moot point. It may be better to view their involvement as an enrichment to the process, rather than as a bias. Like the researcher herself, they are part of an enquiry which is acknowledged to be subjective.

### **4.3. Research in case-study villages**

#### **4.3.1. Introduction**

The work carried out in four case-study villages in different regions of Eritrea between January and April 1996 forms the core of data on women's listening habits and perceptions of education and radio. There were two reasons for choosing to base the investigation into listener's views in case-study villages.

The first reason was to satisfy the dual aims of generalisability and in-depth analysis. It was felt that if the villages chosen were sufficiently typical of rural Eritrean life then the findings would have some generalisability, and might thus provide a convincing basis for the making of recommendations. The reason for desiring in-depth analysis is dictated by the subject matter itself - women's responses to and attitudes to radio - for which a sample survey would not have been sufficient; only a qualitative approach based on interviews and focused discussion would take account of the complexity of the theme.

The second reason was to ground the research in a manageable number of locations in which the researcher and her assistant could develop relationships of trust and familiarity. The reason for this was the inductive nature of the research which, to some extent, developed as it went along. Places were therefore needed which could accept and accommodate a number of visits which could not be predicted at the outset.

### *Choosing and accessing case-study villages*

The four case-study villages were chosen to be as representative as possible of rural life in contemporary Eritrea. As Hakim advises:

‘Confidence in the generalisability of the results of case study design increases with the number of cases covered...When the number of cases remains small, there is advantage in selecting them so as to cover the known range and variation’ (1987:64)

In this case the known range and variation is relatively wide, in spite of the small size of the country; out of an estimated population of 3.5 million there are nine language groups in Eritrea. However (as outlined in Chapter 3) the Tigrinia and Tigre groups between them make up the majority of the Eritrean population and between them reflect the major dichotomies of Eritrean culture; the Tigrinia groups represent the highland Christian culture of settled agriculture and the Tigre population represents lowland, Islamic and agro-pastoral culture. Thus, two villages in Tigrinia-speaking areas and two villages in Tigre-speaking areas were chosen in order to cover 'the known range and variation'.

The villages were chosen according to size and situation in relation to communications and infrastructure. This decision was taken mindful of the ‘tarmac bias’ of researchers identified by Chambers (1983). Thus in each of the two zones one village is relatively large (about 300 households) and has good road connections and some infrastructure, and the other village is relatively small (between 140 and 240 households), away from the road network, and lacking in basic infrastructure. (See Table 1)

**Table 1: Characteristics of case-study villages**

<u>Village</u>	<u>Language</u>	<u>Size</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Amenities</u>
Awlietseru:	Tigrinia	Large	Main Road	Some Infrastructure
Kuandaba:	Tigrinia	Small	Off road	Poor Infrastructure
Gahtelay:	Tigre	Large	Main Road	Some Infrastructure
Bashari:	Tigre	Small	Off road	Poor Infrastructure

The location of the four villages is shown on the Map of Eritrea (see overleaf). Each village is located in a different administrative province<sup>42</sup>.

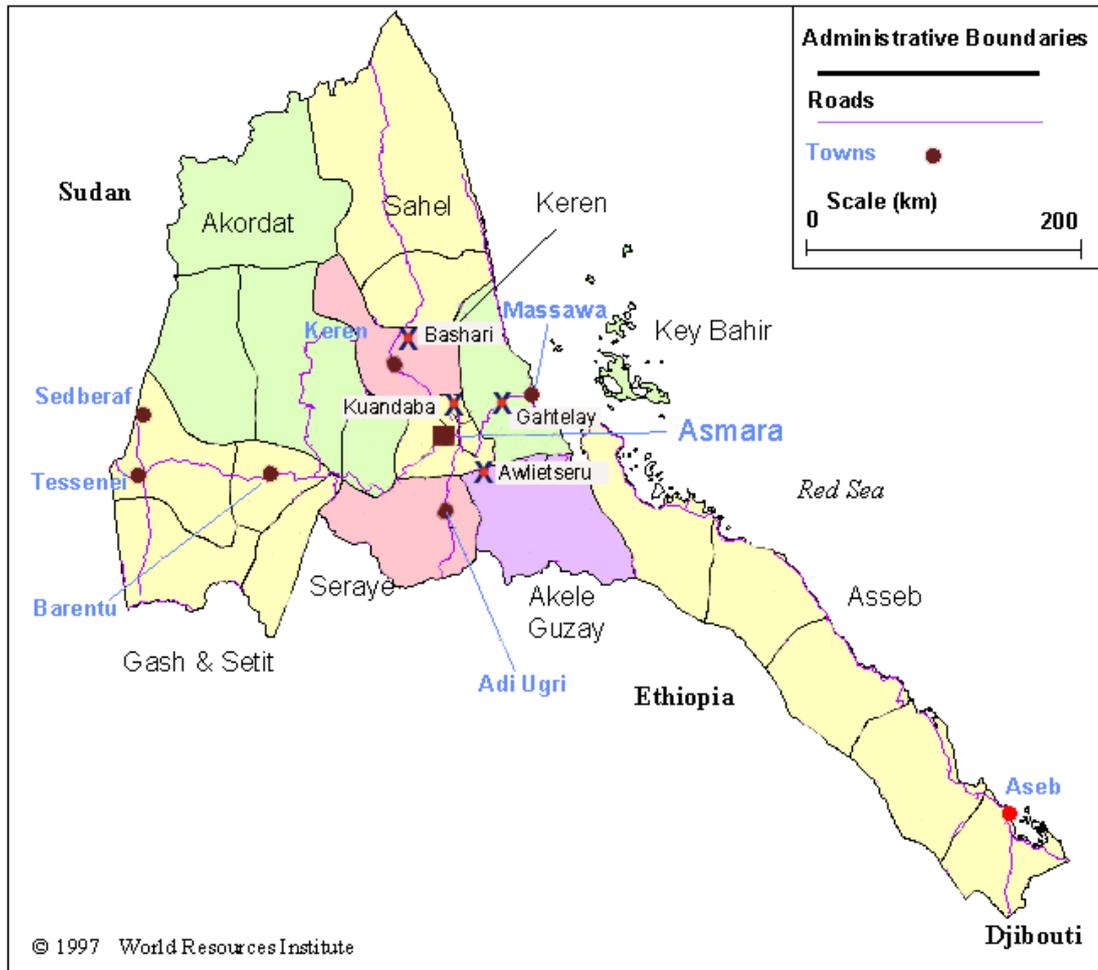
The researcher and her assistant introduced themselves in the villages to key people such as the *baito* heads as independent researchers with the MoE, and said we wished to talk mainly to women about whether and what they listened to on the radio. For the Provincial authorities we carried authorization letters from the MoE.

In three out of four villages the guides were women residents with an official function - either a member of the Baito or the representative of the National Union of Eritrean

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<sup>42</sup> Provincial boundaries changed after the start of the field-research. The old regions are shown on the map. The new regions are Dubub (bringing together parts of Akalai Guzai and Serai); Centre (Asmara and 20km surroundings); southern Red Sea (from Ras Andadai South to the Djibouti border); Northern Red Sea (incorporating parts of Semhar and Sahel); Gash Barka (Bash-Setit and southern Barka) and Anseba, (incorporating northern Hamasin, Senheit and northern Barka) (from Pool, 2001:176).

# Eritrea



**Map of Eritrea showing Case-Study villages**

Women (NUEW). They were designated to help us by the (male) *baito* heads. In Awlietseru, our guide was A. an energetic middle aged woman head of household, who was the only female member of the village *baito*. In Kuandaba, our guide was the head of the *baito* himself - a farmer named T. In Gahtelay our guide was U., a middle aged woman who was the NUEW representative for the whole area, but was resident in the nearby town of Ghinda. In Bashari, our guide was M., the NUEW treasurer for the local administrative area. None of the guides were paid, nor was money expected, but small gifts were given on departure.

### *Local guides*

The influence of these local guides on the interviews with women is worthy of mention. Sometimes, being more educated or of more official standing, they would try to suggest answers, or answer on the women's behalf; this was tactfully discouraged by W. The fact that in Kuandaba, the guide was male, slightly influenced the proceedings because it caused more initial shyness among women interviewees; however, he tended to sit apart, perhaps aware of the need to mitigate this negative influence.

The baseline information collected in each village included the names of the Baito head and that of the Women's Association, the number of households, what facilities (school, clinic etc.) exist, a brief history of the village, the estimated number of radios in the village and an estimated number of literate men and women. During the course of the research, maps and social profiles of each village were drawn up with the help of focus group participants that added to the overall descriptive picture of each village (see Appendix Four).

### *Establishing trust*

It was important to establish relationships of trust from the outset. It was therefore necessary to abide by official procedures and to be seen to be doing so. Having acquired letters of authorization from the MoE in Asmara, these were presented to the provincial administrators who in turn wrote to the Baito heads of the case-study villages. On the whole, and as a result, there was a relatively warm welcome in the villages.

However, there is more to establishing trust than just observing official procedures. The following difficulties experienced in Bashari are given as an illustration of the importance of, and the difficulty associated with, establishing relationships of trust between outsiders and villagers. A certain amount of detail is given here because it is felt that the discussion of such difficulties is intrinsic to the justification of methodology. In so doing, an attempt is made to avoid what Kleinmann and Copp (1993:17) describe as the safe quarantining of 'methodological adventures' from the substantive story, thereby implying that an objective analysis is 'untainted by any troubling (subjective) experiences.'

### *Problems in one case-study village*

The first problem in Bashari was gaining the confidence of the group of women the guide, M., had gathered together. These women thought at first that we had arrived to take their children away for military service. Initially, they had not wanted to come out of their huts, but were reassured by M., who was from Bashari herself. This misconception, although cleared up, subtly tainted the rest of the visit in that it was felt that interviewees were not at ease.

The second problem arose when it came to identifying households owning radios. M. brought together a group of about 20 women in her hut to take part in the discussion, out of which five said they had radios in their households. Needing another seven, M. was asked if any more households in the villages had radios. At this, she said that women from all the radio-owning households had been found and there were no more than the five already interviewed. More questions, encouragements and gentle insistence by W. that there must be more, considering that there were 139 households in the village, made M. even more insistent that there were only five, and that she had already found all of them. It would have been a rude breach of trust not to have accepted her assertions. Nevertheless, on leaving Bashari at the end of the day, we did ask the Baito administration officers if they could help identify other radio-owning households in the village. Although they too thought there must be more than five radios in the village, they also felt it inappropriate to do any other enquiries without M.'s backing. An impasse had been reached. But, during D.'s house-to-house survey, completed later with a different village guide, it was found that there were in fact 24 households with radios in Bashari. Unfortunately, it was felt impossible to return and interview them without offending M. because she would have been needed again, to gain access to the women in these remaining households. Had M. just been reluctant to find other households because it meant a long walk in the midday heat? Was there an ethnic/religious/political divide within the village that she could not cross? Was she indirectly demonstrating the extent to which radios are seen as not being women's business but men's? These remain unanswered questions.

The third problem in Bashari occurred one afternoon towards the end of D.'s house-to-house survey of radio owners. It illustrates the need for extreme tact, and the need to keep research in perspective in the face of the harsh realities of life in a war-torn country like Eritrea. While D. was in the village the news arrived that one of the village boys had been killed by a land-mine on a nearby hillside. At this, all normal activity broke down, as the family was informed and the wailing and mourning began.

D. paid his condolences and discreetly withdrew. He could not complete the full survey (he completed 92 out of a potential 134 households) and could not return later due to pressures of time and money (for hiring of vehicles, fuel, enumerators' pay etc.). The incompleteness of data due to this tragic incident, and the other sampling problems described, are relatively insignificant for the research as a whole, but it illustrates some of the challenges faced during the work in the case-study villages.

#### **4.3.2. Questionnaire-based survey (survey A)**

A questionnaire-based survey (survey A) was used in the four villages to ascertain listening patterns among women and as a basis for more in-depth discussion about radio with individuals (see Appendix 3 for questionnaire). This exercise was an ad hoc sample survey, designed initially to give what Hakim (1997) calls 'descriptive local statistics.'

The decision to begin the research in the villages with a questionnaire was taken because of the need to find a 'way in' to the subject and to the villages and their inhabitants. The questionnaire had both a quantitative and a qualitative purpose, which was four-fold as follows.

- discern patterns of listening ie. trends - what seemed to be women's preferred programmes, subjects, channels and listening times?
- provide a basis for further informal discussion with whoever was interested to speak more fully to us,
- identify other groups for further discussion and deeper research questions, such as any groups of which the respondent was a member, eg. a traditional savings group,
- to provide a way into people's houses - women's spaces - for observation (eg. relating to relative wealth, the physical positioning of the radio etc.)

The questionnaire was not used rigidly; beyond the brief responses required by the questions, it was used to gather complementary information, if it was forthcoming. This is evidenced by the fact that the margins of the original questionnaire-sheets are filled with the spontaneous comments from respondents, noted as verbatim as possible from W.'s verbal translation. Furthermore, the questionnaire-based survey was only one of a number of diverse data-gathering methods used. Therefore, what qualitative weakness it may have are offset by data gathered by other means.

Twelve women were interviewed on the basis of the questionnaire in each village (except in Bashari where only five were covered - for reasons set out above), totaling 41 women. Each set of twelve women was divided into age groups of 'young', 'middle-aged' and 'older' with four individuals in each set. 'Young' women were aged about fifteen to twenty years and were either unmarried or - more usually - married with one or two children. 'Middle-aged' women were aged between twenty and forty years and were generally mothers with children up to teen-age. 'Older' women were aged forty and over, and normally had grandchildren. The purpose behind this categorisation by age was to test whether significant differences between age-groups existed in matters relating to preferences, listening patterns and attitudes to the radio - as was indeed found to be the case.

#### *Administering the questionnaire*

The questionnaire was administered on as random a basis as was possible. Asking the *Baito* head to list all households with radios, these were written down (according to the name of the (usually male) head-of-household) and then twelve names were chosen at random from the list. With the help of our female 'guides' in each village, the chosen households were then visited and the woman of the appropriate age-group was found and invited for interview. If no one was present at the selected

house, the next one on the list was selected. The same procedure applied if no woman from the appropriate age-group was present.

There were two potential problems with this procedure for administering the questionnaire. The first was the possibility of bias on the part of the Baito-head. Because each one gave us names of households with radios 'off the top of his head' it was possible that he could have enumerated a partial list, perhaps biased towards his friends, his clan, or his own section of the village. He could also very easily miss out some households through oversight. This problem was mitigated by spending as much time as possible with the Baito-head - encouraging him and his colleagues to remember as many names of radio-owners as he could. The information was cross-checked when the quantitative survey (survey B) was undertaken. This subsequent survey showed that a complete list had not, in fact, been given, but it was concluded that this was more due to oversight by the *baito*-head than to any conscious or subconscious bias, since the final range of respondents interviewed seemed to be a socio-economic cross-section of the households of each village. The reason why the research in the villages was not started with a quantitative survey, which would have ensured that all radio-owning household had been identified, was because it was important not to appear officious at the outset. The preceding illustration from Bashari shows how suspicious some people were of officialdom, and it was important to gain the trust of the Baito heads and not to be seen to be countermanding their estimates of radio-owning households by immediately proceeding to do an independent check.

The second problem with the representivity of the questionnaire was the paucity of young women in all the case-study villages. This was because most unmarried teenagers, of both sexes, were attending military service at the time. We therefore found that most of our 'young' female respondents, who fitted the under-20 category were married with children because they were exempt from military service and had stayed behind in their villages. This may have biased the responses to the

questionnaire on subjects such as listening preferences, for example, there may be a slight weighting towards interest in mother and child health issues, simply because we had very few respondents who were not mothers.

Once the four villages had been covered, the questionnaires were set out on a spread-sheet and analysed to gain some quantitative and qualitative indication of women's listening patterns. The total number of respondents was forty-one. This is not a large enough sample to be subject to statistical analysis, but it gives a reliable picture of prevailing patterns; the reason being that there was little variation between individuals or between villages, and because the villages themselves were selected to be as representative as possible of the Tigre and Tigrinia ethnic groups.

#### *Critique of the questionnaire*

A critique of the questionnaire used for this ad hoc sample is necessary in order to convey the extent of its usefulness in practice. The first problem encountered, despite all the questions having been pre-tested, was the subtle distinction between listening and hearing. It soon emerged that the question 'Have you listened to the radio today/when was the last time?' was often interpreted by the respondents as being equivalent to 'When was the radio last on?'. Thus the responses about subject-matter, languages, channels and timings (questions 2, 3 and 5) were invariably vague or 'don't know'. Nevertheless, these responses pointed to a significant finding in itself - one that interviewees reiterated time and again - that women feel that they do not have the time or the concentration to listen properly to the radio. Sometimes it is simply 'background noise'. In spite of this, the majority of respondents did express preferences for types of programmes and an awareness of different channels, showing that, at least some of the time most respondents did *listen* rather than just *hear*.

Another problem with the process of administering the questionnaire was linked with respondents' perception of us, the researchers. As mentioned above, most village respondents perceived the researcher and her assistant as being 'from the radio'. This meant that they thought we were either government officials, journalists or both. Courtesy bias was therefore a potential problem. Mitchell (1993) discusses this phenomenon in the context of South East Asia where respondents provide information which they feel will please the interviewer (cited in Bulmer and Warwick 1993).

This is relevant in the Eritrean context too, where villagers faced with outsiders tend, for safety's sake, to provide information or views which they feel they should give to show they are pro-government. This manifested itself on a number of occasions at the outset of the questionnaire-interviews, in which our respondents would invariably declare their enthusiasm for the (state-controlled) radio and claim they listened constantly. However, as the interview progressed it became clear whether or not the respondent was exaggerating, because they were then asked to give more specific details about the content of the programmes and channel(s) they claimed to listen to. This normally enabled a sorting of which respondents were being truthful and who were displaying courtesy bias.

#### **4.3.3. Focus Groups**

In each of the four case-study villages several focus group discussions were held with women and one discussion was held with a group of men. The participants were owners and non-owners of radios, and of varying educational levels. Additionally, one group was convened with men in each village, for the sake of comparison. Almost half (50 out of 93) of the women participants had radios in their households; whereas almost all (10 out of 11) of the smaller male-sample owned radios. The aim was to use the different focus groups to find out what place radio holds in women's network of information sources, how women regard education, and

what positive and negative aspects they see in radio. The discussions held with men provided an opportunity for general comparisons to be made between men and women's perceptions. One focus group in each place was also asked to draw a map and 'social pyramid' of their village.

The idea behind the use of focus groups as a structure was to encourage informal discussions with a variety of natural groupings in which participants would feel at ease. The advantage of focus groups from the point of view of the research process was that they saved time and were a more reliable method of gathering qualitative information than a series of interviews with individuals because they produced a consensus of opinion, through debate.

Apart from the consideration of ensuring that participants were at their ease, it was decided to base focus groups on pre-existing sets, such as savings-groups and youth groups, because it is difficult to gather women, who are constantly busy and tied to the home, in any other forum than those they would attend normally. Nevertheless it was not always possible to identify pre-existing groupings or ones which met regularly and at a convenient time for our purposes. In several cases discussions were held spontaneously with groups of women who happened to be visiting our guide's house - perhaps around coffee. In other cases we deliberately gathered women of one or other interest or age-group together, for example we created a 'women heads of household group' or a 'traditional midwives group'. These gatherings were obviously somewhat artificial, and although it enabled a cross-section of interests to be represented, better quality discussion took place when the gatherings were more spontaneous.

In each village the aim was to hold five or six group discussions. Numbers in each discussion were between four and eight individuals - normally with accompanying babies or small children. The groupings were normally as follows: members of the National Union of Eritrean Women (NUEW), members of a youth group (sometimes under the banner of National Union of Eritrean Youth (NUEY)), members of a

traditional savings or prayer group, and a women-headed-household or midwives group. Where only some or none of these groups existed, as in Bashari, the groupings were constituted by age-group and other criteria such as literacy-levels.

Men's groups were chosen at random, tending to take self-selected groups of men who happened to be working or relaxing together. The only condition made with regard to the men's groups was that there should be a relatively good cross-section of ages represented.

#### **4.3.4. Information Sources**

Discussions about information sources were based around a standard list devised to test participants' levels and source of knowledge about a range of topics. These were deliberately chosen to test a number of 'hunches' about the kinds of subjects radio might or might not be important for. The topics were as follows:

1. News Topic: conflict with Yemen over the Hanish Islands<sup>43</sup>
2. Governmental/Citizenship topic: The Constitution
3. Health/Social topic: Contraception
4. Specific health advice: Oral Rehydration Solution
5. News/health advice: AIDS
6. Agriculture/women's advice: chicken disease
7. Personal news: births/marriages/deaths of distant relatives
8. Educational advice: how/where to enrol for further education
9. Health advice: where and when to take children for immunization.

The reasons for the choice of the above topics were as follows. The general idea

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<sup>43</sup> Eritrea and Yemen were involved in a brief war in 1996 over sovereignty of a small group of islands in the Red Sea. International arbitration eventually found in favour of Yemen.

was to understand where respondents obtained their information and, indirectly, to ascertain the place of radio in their lives. As wide a range of subjects were chosen as was possible, given the time constraints (it was important not to bore or irritate the groups with over-lengthy sessions) and what was likely to be relevant to them. (As it transpired, some of the subjects were only of marginal relevance to them - particularly the question about how or where to enrol for further education - and it was dropped, except in discussions with the younger women. Also for the younger groups a further question was added which related to how they obtained information about military service - the response in this case was most usually 'the radio'). The news topic - about the current war with Yemen over the Hanish islands - was designed to find out what mass media sources were important for news, and it quickly became clear that radio was the only mass-medium that was pertinent; television and newspapers were inapplicable. The subject of the constitution was topical, since the Eritrean Constitution Commission was meeting and consulting during our period of fieldwork; it was therefore interesting to find out firstly how much people knew about it and secondly whether or not radio or *Baito* meetings were more important.

Of the four health topics, contraception, oral rehydration therapy and immunization were chosen as being particularly relevant to women. AIDS was chosen because it was known to have received relatively wide coverage on the radio. The agricultural topic of chicken diseases was chosen because it is women rather than men who take care of poultry and because, again, it was known that poultry-keeping had recently been a radio-education topic, therefore it was interesting to see if women had heard the programmes and how they reacted to them. The item on personal announcements of births, marriages and deaths was simply to ascertain whether or not the radio carried these announcements; it quickly became clear that DH had ceased this service (though it had been of great importance during the war), so the question was subsequently dropped, as was the question about educational enrolment.

### *Procedure for the focus-groups on information-sources*

The groups were guided through the list of topics in the above order and first asked what they knew of the topic and then what their sources of information were. At the end of this discussion, the group was then asked to help fill in a matrix about the importance for them of different sources of information for each topic. For example, taking the first topic about news of Yemen, a typical interchange (minus the clarifications and extraneous discussion) would be as follows:

Question: 'What is Yemen?', Answer (by consensus after a short discussion): 'An Arab country with which we're at war'

Question: 'What is the war about?' Answer: 'Islands called Hanish. It is our land, the Yemenis took it and war broke out'

Question: 'How did you hear about it?' Answer: 'Through the radio and from around the village'

The main drawback with this matrix exercise was that it was originally meant to show a more generalised picture: it was hoped that the respondents in each group would be able to indicate the relative importance of each information source *for the community as a whole*. Unfortunately, this did not come across sufficiently clearly, and the result was that each of the respondents just indicated which were their own personal sources for each type of information. Therefore each cross in the matrix represented a source for the individual who marked it – and some individuals obtained their information from more than one source, and thus marked more than one square. Thus, the completed matrices showed which sources were most commonly accessed by women for each type of information, not, as was first hoped, a picture of the relative information sources for the whole community. Nevertheless, the exercise provided an indicative picture of villagers' information sources and the

relative importance of each one.

#### **4.3.5. Further Discussions with Focus Groups**

Discussion with some of the focus groups was widened after having done the information sources exercise. The decision to do this tended to be taken spontaneously depending on the atmosphere in the group; whether or not the participants were happy to give up more of their time and whether or not they seemed to be enjoying and participating fully in the discussion.

On these occasions the group was asked to enumerate the advantages and disadvantages of radio as they saw them. This discussion would normally be similar to a brainstorming session. The results were short lists in two columns under 'Pros' and 'Cons'. In order to stimulate discussion one or two other questions were added; usually these were: 'What sort of people benefit from radio most?', 'Do you think the radio always tells the truth?' and 'Are there any subjects you would like to hear about on the radio that are not on at present?'.

Often the participants would bring up the subject of education, as in comments like 'Radio is educational, for example you know what to do about disease'. These comments would be pursued with more prompting, such as 'What have you learned about disease from the radio?' or 'What other subjects does radio teach you about?' Often this line of questioning would provoke some interesting comments about the comparative benefits of schooling and radio, and precisely how radio was perceived to be educational.

As and when the opportunity arose, discussions were held which did not adhere to any pre-prepared format. This happened informally several times, but notably in

Awlietseru and Kuandaba with former members of a Listening Centre and with a group of traditional midwives.

#### **4.3.6. Radio-Listening Focus-Groups**

Having completed a series of focus groups about information sources (described above), it was necessary to test a number of issues suggested by the field research, thus adhering to an inductive approach. The main issues arising were, firstly, that educated people might be able to understand the radio better than those who were non-educated. Secondly, that men and young people of both sexes, especially 'students', might display a better understanding than middle-aged and older women. Furthermore, it was important to observe the process of listening to educational programmes and to elicit listeners' reactions to the format, language and register in which the information in the programmes were presented.

A series of radio-listening focus-groups in each village were convened based around an educational radio programme about malaria in Tigrinia and one about adolescence in the Tigre language. The programmes were pre-recorded onto cassette and were each approximately forty-five minutes long. Both were actual programmes that had already been broadcast some months previously by the EMMP. Both programmes featured one main speaker presenting information in a variety of styles - talk, interviews and poetry - interspersed with music appropriate to the ethnic group of the target audience. A full translation into English was made of each programme prior to the exercise, to enable the researcher to follow the broadcasts and the listeners' reactions as they were played to the listening-groups (see Appendix 5).

The groups were as follows:

### 1. Malaria programme in Tigrinia

Awlietseru: 1. Group of four women deemed 'highly educated' (one woman with seven years, the rest with six years of schooling)

2. Group of four women with no schooling

3. Group of five men all with some schooling

Kuandaba: 1. Pair of young women with schooling up to 3rd grade

2. Group of four women with no schooling

3. Mixed group of seven men, some with no schooling and some up to seven years

### 2. Adolescence programme in Tigre

Gahtelay: Group of four 'less educated' women

Group of three 'educated' young and middle aged women

Group of five young and middle aged men with some schooling

Bashari: Group of four 'less educated' women

Group of four 'educated' women

Group of four men without formal schooling

Each group listened to the relevant programme with breaks at the musical interludes - about every twenty minutes - during which they were asked for their feedback on the contents of the preceding audio section. At the end of the session participants were asked for their reaction to the overall format of the programme, whether or not they liked and/or gained from it.

In order to convey an impression of the way the listening group discussions were conducted, the questions on the poem which comprised the first section of the malaria programme are summarised below:

1. What was the subject?
2. What were the main messages?
3. What is meant by [specialist language such as] *Anopheles*, *Pupa* and *Larva*?
4. What information is new for you?
5. Do you have any comments about the speaker or the poem itself? (voice quality, pace, style of poetry etc.)

There was little difference between the understanding displayed by 'educated' and 'non-educated' listeners, and little difference between men and women, young and old. However, what this experiment showed was differences in *approaches* to the radio between groups. It was a valuable exercise also for pointing-up some issues related to language, style and register. Simply being with people while they listened to the radio was informative in itself. Observing their body language and overhearing their comments was valuable. For example, on one occasion, when the musical interlude in the malaria programme started, one group of women got up and danced, showing that they appreciated the style of music used in the programme.

#### *Issues relating to the experimental listening focus-groups*

This phase of the field-work was the only time in which an experimental approach was used as opposed to a naturalistic approach. A situation was set up in which groups of people were gathered together and invited to listen to and comment on an audio cassette recording of a radio programme. Clearly, this is not the natural way in which rural Eritreans listen to the radio; in some cases, particularly for women, taking part in these experiments may have been the first time they had listened to an audio piece for any length of time and in a concentrated manner. But the manner in which the groups were convened was as informal as possible and the dancing incident shows that we were able to avoid a formal atmosphere.

The exercise was far from perfect: it would, for example, have been preferable to have tested the same subject-matter with the two language groups, instead of malaria for the Tigrinia and adolescence for the Tigre group. Unfortunately, no equivalent programmes had been recorded in both languages at the time. It would also have been interesting to test reactions to one subject-matter presented in more than one format - for example, one message (say, about the importance of early breast-feeding) in the form of a poem, a drama, a talk and a song. It may then have been possible to test whether or not drama, say, is more effective than other formats in attracting and retaining listeners' attention. Attempts were made to find appropriate radio programmes for this purpose but no appropriate set of recordings could be found.

#### **4.3.7. Quantitative Survey (Survey B)**

After most of the above work had been completed in the four case-study villages, a further quantitative survey (survey B) was carried out with the aim of ascertaining the following information:

- 1) How many radio-owning households there were in each village.
- 2) What proportion of these radios were in working order.
- 3) What proportion of these households had any members who listened to the Adult Education (EMMP) channel.
- 4) What proportion of these Adult Education (EMMP) listeners were women.

There were several reasons for wanting the above information. Firstly, (as discussed above) some conflicting information was emerging (e.g. in Bashari) about the percentage of radio-ownership. Secondly, because there had never been a comprehensive media survey of Eritrea, and it was felt any statistical data about

Eritrean radio audiences would be useful to the Ministries of Education and Information. Thirdly, it was interesting to test whether or not villagers' own perceptions of radio ownership and listening patterns in their communities were correct.

To carry out this survey D. was recruited as coordinator and employed a number of friends (young men and women who could speak Tigre and Tigrinia) as enumerators. D. carried out his work in the four case-study villages in late March and early April 1996, adhering to a questionnaire and survey-design devised by the researcher and reporting back to her in Asmara on a daily basis.

D. gained access to the case-study villages following official channels, carrying a letter of introduction from the Ministry of Education. The survey took approximately ten working days to complete. Each village was covered as comprehensively as possible, with an enumerator visiting every house in the village and checking them against official records held by the *Baito* head. The purpose of visiting every household was to ensure that no one was left out accidentally.

#### *Difficulties with survey B*

Nevertheless, it was not possible to do a completely inclusive survey for the following reasons. It was found that a proportion, averaging about ten per cent, of official residents were in fact living away from the villages, (they just had plots of land reserved for them). This decreased the overall population totals, and therefore slightly increased the proportion of radio-ownership. Thus, for example, in Kuandaba, the official number of households is 240, of which 79 households were found to have radios: a rate of 33% . However, when the total number of official households is reduced by the number of absentees - in this case about 30 - the percentage of radio-owning households rises to almost 38%. It was not possible for

D. and his team of enumerators to interview all households (for example in Kuandaba about 35 permanent residents had temporarily shut up their houses at the time the survey was carried out), so if it is assumed that the same proportion of absent residents own radios, then 13 more radios are added to the total for Kuandaba, bringing the percentage of radio-owning permanent households in Kuandaba to almost 44%.

There were further difficulties in other villages, particularly in Gahtelay where it was found that over a third of the official households registered there had moved away temporarily to follow their cattle to better pasture. D. was not able to follow them to their temporary settlement because of security problems in that area. The survey therefore had to limit itself to the settled population of Gahtelay, which numbered 108. Out of this, about one third of households were found to have radios.

Despite the above procedural difficulties, the survey was valuable for giving a relatively reliable estimate of rates of radio-ownership. Gaining this knowledge was useful to the research project as a whole, since the relatively high proportion of radio ownership it revealed helps to justify the whole undertaking. However, it also puts into perspective some of the rather exaggerated informal estimates that had previously been gathered from other sources. For example, the Mol estimated that '60% of people in Eritrea have radios'<sup>44</sup> and in Gahtelay, the Baito-head said that radio-listening was so high in his village that 'even the dogs have radios'<sup>45</sup>.

#### **4.3.8. Survey and interviews done outside Case-Study Villages (survey C)**

As part of her work with the Ministry of Education, the researcher organised and administered one other survey. This formed part of a message-development

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<sup>44</sup> Personal communication, Gordon Adam, 1994

<sup>45</sup> Personal communication, Ahmed Shebrallah, December 1995

workshop organised in 1995 by the researcher, for the EMMP producers and some DH journalists, involving producing, broadcasting and evaluating radio campaigns. The themes were tree-enclosures and breast-feeding. Briefly, the aim of the radio campaign was to explain people's rights in relation to a new GoE policy which involved fencing-off a part of a village's communal grazing land to allow the regeneration of natural tree-cover. The breast-feeding campaign centred around the need to feed the first milk (colostrum) to newborns, and to avoid other foods, like sugar or butter, which are traditionally given to newborns (Myers et. al, 1995).

Although the survey linked with this campaign was not designed specifically with the questions of this study in mind, some of the findings are pertinent and are quoted in the overall research findings. This was a random questionnaire covering 72 men and 36 women in 12 villages in the highlands<sup>46</sup> (see survey C in Appendix). The questions concentrated on respondents' views and practice about the two subjects. Six villages were covered in the pre-broadcast survey and six different villages were covered post-broadcast. The aspects that were relevant to the present study were evidence of attitude and behaviour change, of which a handful of anecdotes were gathered.

In the findings of this research, mention is also made of a series of interviews held in connection with an the immunization campaign undertaken by DH and EMMP broadcasters. These were carried-out by the researcher in late 1996 in a number of clinics in the highlands. Again, a number of quotes were gathered testifying to the usefulness of the immunization campaign (see Myers et.al. 1995).

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<sup>46</sup> Afelba, Aba, Khe Khor and Awlietseru in Akeleguzai province; Adi Koteyo, Adi Baro, Daro Kuna'a and Adi Logo in Seray province; Zibangheb, Shimangus Lalai, Mbeito and Tsahaflam in Hamesein province.

#### **4.4. Interviews with Key Informants**

Semi-structured key informant interviews are an integral component of qualitative methodologies. Erlandson (1993:85) et al. refer to them as 'purposeful conversations'. There is a distinction between interviewing and ordinary conversation which lies in interviewing's 'purposefulness.'

Many 'purposeful conversations' were held during the course of the present research, particularly during field-work in the case-study villages and during the training of radio producers. Most of these were illuminating, though not particularly carefully prepared. But a distinct set of semi-structured interviews was undertaken that were more structured. The content and conclusions drawn from this set of interviews inform much of the argument of the present study.

Having gathered data from rural listeners, it was necessary to gather facts and opinions from the radio-producers. Therefore a series of interviews with radio station staff in Asmara were carried out - both at DH and EMMP. The other set of interviewees can be categorised as 'commentators'; they are people with a close interest in radio, women and education, but who are not directly linked to the production of programmes or policy. A total of fourteen such interviews were carried out in Asmara in November 1996 and some, subsequently, in London. The interviewees were eight radio producers (five men and three women), four of whom were from EMMP, four from DH. The other commentators comprised one female representative of the NUEW, one field director from an international NGO, one expatriate consultant, two-ex-journalists from DH and one former member of the Cultural Programme of the MoE.

All interviews were based around a list of questions, which were prepared specially for each informant. In most cases respondents were given their list of questions

before the interview took place, in order to prepare themselves, but in most cases the actual interview was quite informal and departed naturally from the set questions. All of them were conducted in English, mostly at the respondents' place of work, and most of the them were recorded. The set of questions which formed the basis of the interviews with the radio producers were as follows:

- What is your job title and when did you join [your organization]?
- What programmes are you responsible for and what times are they broadcast?
- Who do you think are the main audience for each of these programmes (prompt: men/women? young/old? rural/urban? highland/lowland?)
- How do you decide what subjects to cover? (add: what's your source of information?)
- How do you decide what formats to use?
- Which do you think have been your best programmes? Why? (add: can I see scripts or get tapes?)
- Do you think rural women are benefitting from your programmes? In what ways? How do you know? (prompt: do you receive letters from listeners? can I see them?)
- What are the main problems for women listeners?
- What are your main problems in your work at present? (prompt: if you had three wishes what would they be?)

The interviews with the commentators were each quite different from each other and cannot be given in their entirety here. They concentrated on the particular experience or expertise of the informant, and were designed to elicit as much of their honest opinions as possible. A number of them did not wish to be recorded or quoted directly, mainly because some interviewees expressed opinions that could be construed as anti-government.

## 4.5. Consultation of Secondary Sources

Secondary sources means such data as can be found in books, maps, reports, photographs, scripts, works of art and articles. Consultation of such sources has run right through the present study; from the identification of subject-matter, through field-work to writing-up. The great majority are acknowledged in the bibliography, but there are inevitably some sources, such as photos and scripts and casual conversations which inform the study but were not recorded.

As with key informant interviews, the consultation of secondary sources is crucial in order to gain as holistic a picture as possible of the subject at hand. But writers like Chambers (1997) warn that they must be selected carefully, analysed dispassionately and must not be relied upon too heavily. For the present study, it would, however, have been difficult to rely too heavily on secondary data, since little exists. Because Eritrea is a very new nation, few statistics, surveys or basic social, economic, geographical and demographic facts have yet been gathered. Older material rarely differentiates Eritrea from Ethiopia, and is often politically biased and unreliable. No population census had been completed at the time of field-work; and so, not surprisingly, there is minimal knowledge of the populations' media-consumption patterns (there are no figures for radio-ownership, newspaper readership, television viewing and so on). Gender-specific research - such as the present study - is problematic since disaggregated statistics are particularly hard to find. Given the paucity of research-based information about Eritrea, the present study represents an additional contribution to those few that exist.

## Chapter 5: Rural Women Listeners in Eritrea

### 5.1 Introduction

Having described the methodology for the fieldwork, this chapter sets out the research findings of that fieldwork, pertaining to rural women radio listeners. After a brief description of conditions and constraints of radio listening affecting rural communities as a whole, the main focus is on understanding when, where, how, why and to what effect rural Eritrean women receive and respond to radio broadcasts, particularly those intended as educational and developmental.

### 5.2 Factors Affecting Radio Listening for Rural Communities

This section is mainly about obstacles to radio listening in rural Eritrea. However, it must be emphasised that if people can access a radio, most of them will; they generally set great store by it, enjoy listening to it, and attach status to owning a set. A number of enthusiastic statements from interviewees illustrate this point:

**“I listen from A to Z, three times a day, I don’t miss a single programme. I would rather hang myself than not have batteries in my radio.” – A5<sup>47</sup>**

**“I love the radio, I would sleep with it next to me, if I could.” – G8**

**“The first radio in this village [Bashari] was mine! It’s been with me for the last 10 years. I got it from my son by telling him I needed to know when Ramadan started, so then I told the whole village. I’ve kept the radio since then, and now when music comes on I get up and dance. I would have it on all the time if possible.” – B5**

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<sup>47</sup> In survey A, respondents remained anonymous, so are denoted by the initial of their village (A = Awlietseru, B = Bashari, K=Kuandaba and G = Gahtelay, and a number (e.g. B5, K7 etc.). NB. All respondents are female unless stated otherwise.

However, there are a number of significant obstacles to radio listening. Many are gender-specific, which will be looked at later in this section, but first, the following are some of the general factors limiting radio listening at community-level.

### 5.2.1 Lack of sets and batteries

Clearly the largest factor limiting the amount of radio listening done by the Eritrean rural population is the number of households with sets. An average of 38 per cent of households in the four villages sampled owned radios. In the more affluent communities the average was around 44 per cent, whereas in the poorer villages, it was around 32 percent (see below Table 2).

**Table 2: Radio ownership, by household, in case-study villages**

<b>Village name</b>	<b>Total no. of households in village</b>	<b>No. of Radio-owning households in village</b>	<b>Percentage of households with radios</b>
Awlietseru	280	122	43.57%
Kuandaba	176	79	44.88%
Gahtelay	108	39	36.11%
Bashari	92	25	27.17%
<b>Total</b>	<b>656</b>	<b>265</b>	<b>38% average</b>

The majority of sets were in working order: (83 per cent of the sample of 265). If the set was not working, it was more often due to breakage than to lack of batteries. In survey B the sample was asked whether, if batteries were cheaper, they would listen more often. In the majority of cases, the cost of batteries was not prohibitive. However, this was not an overwhelming majority (17 out of 41 still said that affording batteries was a problem).

### **5.2.2. Reception, Scheduling and Languages**

Reception is problematic: the strength of both the DH and the EMMP Medium Wave (MW) signals varies from place to place, with the central Highlands having the best, and the Lowlands the worst. Some far-flung places like Assab can barely receive radio from Asmara at all (Ministry of Education<sup>b</sup>, 1995).

Another factor which limits listening is the broadcast timetable itself. The main DH channel is on-air for only nine hours per day (with a little longer on Sundays) and the EMMP channel for four hours per day, on only three days per week. These transmissions must cover several languages; a fact which limits access even further. Thus, the average Tigrinia, or Tigre speaker (assuming they only understand one language) will understand only three hours of radio transmission on an average day. Afar and Kunama speakers will understand only one and a half hours. And those minorities who only speak and understand, for example Belein or Saho<sup>48</sup>, will understand nothing at all (as at 1995/96).

Other international channels and those from neighbouring countries are available to those listeners who are either close to borders with Ethiopia, Sudan etc., or who have Short Wave (SW) sets. There is little programming in Tigrinia from abroad, except from Ethiopia, but those who understand Arabic and English have a relatively wide choice on SW, including the BBC, Voice of America and transmissions from the Gulf. However, SW receivers are relatively expensive and scarce, and no respondents were encountered who said that they regularly listened to anything other than Eritrean radio.

### **5.2.3. Critical Listening**

Few respondents openly criticised the quality of radio programmes, and almost no one expressed a desire for more or less of any particular subject-matter or style. Some complained about bad reception, or wished for more hours of transmission; but the actual quality, delivery or interest-factor were rarely mentioned. However, there were one or two notable exceptions to this rule. For example, during one group-

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<sup>48</sup> 2.1 percent and 5 percent of the total Eritrean population, respectively

discussion about a radio-talk about adolescence, one man remarked under his breath: **“What’s the use of this stupid programme?”** Other negative comments were given obliquely, such as one from an old woman in Awlietseru who said:

**“Radio speaks about whatever human beings give it, and we humans cannot always cross our hearts and say we’re telling the truth”**

Several older people interviewed were not interested in listening at all. In the sample of 41 women, 13 rarely or never listened to, or took any interest in, the household radio. All of these were in the ‘middle’ or ‘older’ age-bracket. Some said they did not have time, some said they were too sick to listen, but some were simply not interested. For example, one very old woman from Kuandaba said:

**“They say that the radio brings good news and it’s good to listen, but I’ve never listened. I don’t even notice when it’s on or off.” - K7**

Another, from the same village said:

**“I am too old to be able to work the radio. If I touched it I’d break it. I only have half a mind... I only know that the radio is on, but I’ve never listened. You should ask these questions to the young ones.” - K6**

So those who are simply indifferent to radio or dismiss it altogether tend to be among the older generation, and the reasons seem to be partly a matter of personal taste and partly a consequence of age. But apart from those just quoted, all the evidence of dissatisfaction with programme quality, style or content was gathered indirectly.

There are several reasons for this absence of overt criticism. Firstly, as described in the previous chapter, it may be due in part to the fact that radio is government-controlled and that Eritreans are generally reluctant to openly criticise. Secondly, rural Eritreans have only recently emerged from a prolonged period of intense suffering and social disruption, and are probably simply thankful to have a radio at all. For example, one woman from a focus group in Bashari said:

**“We lost everything in the war. We are starting from scratch now. Radios are a luxury at this time for us. We were always running for our lives. In this area [near Keren] we were amid the last stages of the war.”**

Thirdly, they have nothing with which to compare the programmes they receive, since few listeners have access to foreign stations, and the GoE has a monopoly on the airwaves.

### **5.3. Women’s Listening Patterns**

#### **5.3.1. Control of the Radio Set**

Within the household, the male head will normally have bought the radio set and will normally be the person responsible for replenishing the batteries. In the sample for survey A only one woman (out of 41) had bought the radio herself. Significantly, this woman was a former fighter, so it can be assumed that, like many other fighters, she had bought her radio with the money she had received on being demobilized. Otherwise rural women rarely have access to money, except through their husbands, fathers or sons. However, one such woman is worth quoting as an illustration of the rarity with which women have access to cash, and the lengths to which they must go if they positively want to listen regularly to the radio:

**“I buy the batteries for myself, but I have no income, so when my son gives me money for the grinding mill, I save some grain, bind my clothes tightly around me to support my back, and grind it myself. Then I hide the grinding stone from my son in case he asks why I haven’t spent the money on going to the mill. I would have the radio on all the time if possible!” - B5**

It was found that on the whole, women are free to listen to the set while they are at home. Only two out of 41 clearly were not permitted to touch the radio sets in their own homes: this was because their husbands happened to be particularly controlling; not, it was found, due to any wider cultural pattern. However, male heads-of-

household tend to monopolise the set when present at home; typically turning it on and keeping it beside them on return from the fields in the evening. When relaxing in the evenings or on non-work days men will often take it outside and listen to it with a group of male friends. Whereas it is usual to see men or older boys carrying their sets around the village or in the fields, it is extremely rare to see women with radios in a public place.

One aspect of managing the radio set is being able to operate it (switch on/off, regulate volume and reception, change channels). The majority of women could operate the set with no difficulty (30 out of 41 respondents), but there was a marked disparity between old and young; the older group being less able to work the household set (see Table 3 below).

**Table 3: Ability of women to operate the radio – by age group**

Total number of women interviewees = 41

<b>Age group of woman</b>	<b>Number in sample</b>	<b>Can operate radio set</b>
Young	13	12
Middle-aged	15	12
Older	13	6
<b>Total</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>30</b>

### **5.3.2. Radio Listening patterns within the household**

When asked who in the household listens most, there was not a marked difference between women and men, and women often said they listened more than anyone else because they were at home most of the day, whereas men were out at market or in the fields (see Table 4 below). (Whether the word 'listening' really means paying attention to the radio or whether in fact it just means 'hearing' is an issue, and is discussed below).

**Table 4: Responses to the question ‘Who listens to the radio most in your household?’**

Total number of women interviewees = 41

Self (i.e. woman interviewee)	Husband	Adult son	Child under 16 yrs.	Self and Brother/Son	Adult daughter	Adult son & daughter in-law	Total
13	11	8	5	2	1	1	<b>41</b>

### 5.3.3. Sharing of radio sets

Respondents were asked if anyone came to listen to their radio from outside the household. The overwhelming response was negative: only five out of 41 women respondents said that friends or neighbours of either sex ever came to listen to the household set. In focus groups, women without radios in their households said that they had access to their neighbours’ sets, but they go very rarely because they are too busy. However, those without radios said that they were in the habit of consulting their radio-owning neighbours for news or items of information. So, there seems to be a good deal of indirect sharing among women which does not involve physically gathering around a radio.

### 5.3.4 Regularity with which women listen

In survey A, 41 women with radios in their households were asked how regularly they listened to their radios. The majority (24 out of 41) said they listened every day. The survey disaggregated the sample by age, but on this question there was no discernible pattern: the age of the woman did not affect the regularity with which she listened. However, it was only members of the middle-aged and older age-group who said they *never* listened to the household radio (4 out of 41). By contrast, when

asked how often women listened specifically to the Educational Mass Media channel (EMMP), it was found that there was greater disparity in terms of age; a greater proportion of young women listened to the EMMP programmes on a regular basis than did older women. If they listened at all, older women seemed to prefer the main channel, *Dimtsi Haffash* (DH).

There is a general preference among all listeners (all ages and both sexes) for the DH channel. Nevertheless, the EMMP channel has a respectable following: in the larger survey of radio ownership, survey B, 81 per cent of households with radios had members who listened regularly to EMMP in addition to DH.<sup>49</sup> (see Table 5 below)

**Table 5: Listeners to the EMMP channel, by village**

<b>Village</b>	<b>Households with radios</b>	<b>Households with regular listeners to EMMP</b>
Awlietseru	122	95
Kuandaba	79	68
Gahtelay	39	30
Bashari	25	24
<b>Total</b>	<b>265</b>	<b>217 = 81%</b>

In survey A, it was found that 32 out of the total of 41 women had ever listened to the EMMP channel: 14 out of 41 claimed to listen to this channel regularly and 18 irregularly.

### **5.3.5 When women listen**

<sup>49</sup> This finding agrees with an MOE survey of 1994 (MOEb, 1995) which found that 'of 130 adults, 110 said that they had listened to several programmes of EMMP'. The percentage of listeners who have ever tuned to the EMMP in the MOE survey is therefore about 84%, which roughly agrees with this research's figure, which is 81%.

In survey A, a large proportion of women listeners (23 out of 37 listeners) said that they tended to listen to the radio two to three times per day<sup>50</sup>. For those who listened only once or twice, there seemed to be a slight weighting towards listening in the morning as opposed to noon or evening. Only 12 out of 37 stated a preference for a certain day, namely Sunday. When asked why this was so, respondents said this was when a favourite programme was broadcast (invariably the 'Sunday variety show' and/or dramas). Broadcast times on DH and EMMP therefore seem broadly to agree with rural women's routines, in so far as respondents never said that any programme was broadcast at an inconvenient time. However, questions remain about *how* women listen, and to what extent they are listening as opposed to hearing.

### 5.3.6 How women listen

When asking the question: 'Have you listened to the radio today?' it was realised that respondents were often interpreting this as 'Has the radio been on today?'. These women would say they had listened, but, when questioned, would then have no idea of the content, style, or language of the programme. In order to see to what extent respondents had listened attentively, they were asked briefly to describe the last programme they had heard. Almost half the sample named the last programme they had heard (ie. 20 out of 41) (see Table 6 below). This was usually a simple description like '**songs in Tigrinia**' or '**the news**'; but sometimes they would go into more detail, such as '**I heard news about Yemen and that two Eritreans have been imprisoned there.**' – A3

However, a significant proportion of the sample (about one third) said that although the radio was on in their households on a regular basis, they rarely or never paid attention to it. At best, this group had a vague recollection that the last time the radio was on, it was 'singing' or 'the news'. These tended to be among the older age-group. They were therefore excluded from the group judged to have listened attentively to the last programme they had heard.

The following is a list of programmes from the twenty respondents who remembered the nature of the programmes they had heard most recently. The list does not have

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<sup>50</sup> DH broadcasts are thrice daily as follows: 6.30am-9am, 12.30pm-2.30pm and 5.30pm-9pm.

any statistical significance, but it gives an illustration of the kind of material which is most commonly and regularly broadcast, and that which is most usually heard by women. As one would expect, music and news come top of the list since these are the two most common items of radio output overall. Likewise, the EMMP channel is less frequently cited than DH because it has a more limited broadcast schedule.

**Table 6: ‘Last programme heard’ and channel it was on**

<b>What was the subject of the last programme you heard?</b>	<b>Which channel was it on?</b>	<b>No. of respondents</b>
Singing/Music	DH	6
News	DH	5
Rights of women	DH	2
Play/Drama	DH	2
‘About high blood pressure’	EMMP	1
Colds and flu	DH	1
‘About mothers’	EMMP	1
Listeners’ Choice	DH	1
Children’s Prog. And News	DH	1
<b>Total (minus 21 who could not name last programme heard)</b>		<b>20</b>

Significantly, those who named the last programme they had heard could also recall the channel. This reinforces the presumption that these respondents were listening relatively attentively. (But of course respondents could sometimes make mistakes; for example, in Table 7 below, one listener cites ‘Female circumcision’ as a topic she has heard on EMMP; but this topic has only ever been treated on the DH channel. Thus, sometimes respondents may assume that a topic is on EMMP because it is a serious type of programme, more typical of EMMP than of DH.)

### 5.3.7. How women listen to the Education channel

When sampling the listeners to the EMMP channel it was found that a high proportion were able to give more than just a vague answer to the question 'What do you recall from any of the Adult Education programmes you have ever listened to?' Out of the 32 women interviewees who had ever listened to EMMP, 27 mentioned what they remembered from the EMMP programmes with more than just a vague or one-word answer. Of these 27, 15 women were able to describe the content and argument of the programme they remembered in considerable detail. Assuming that ability to recall and describe the content and argument of a programme denotes attentiveness to it, it was noticeable that the least attentive were older and the most attentive were younger women.

Health topics (i.e. childcare, hygiene and pregnancy/motherhood) were the ones most commonly recalled. Civics and Agriculture were far less commonly recalled, despite having been broadcast with the same regularity as the Health programmes during the period immediately preceding our survey. The subjects listeners remembered are possibly significant, as they seem to indicate what particularly interested them<sup>51</sup>. As such, the findings are not a surprise as they reflect the normal sexual division of labour, where women take care of children and the home and the small stock such as poultry, and men occupy themselves primarily with agricultural production and public affairs. Recall of health programmes as opposed to civics programmes is therefore what one would probably expect in a sample of rural women in Eritrea.

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<sup>51</sup> This presumption that adult learners tend to remember best that which is relevant to their lives accords with theory in cognitive psychology which posits that people remember and retain information in long-term memory by encoding and storing it in schemata in the brain which organises memories into meaningful relations. If the information is not directly meaningful and does not map on to their personal concerns, learners are less likely to remember it (see Abadzi, 1990).

**Table 7: Answers to question: ‘What do you recall from the EMMP programmes’?**

Total number of respondents = 27 (all female) NB: some respondents named more than one subject.

<b>Topic</b>	<b>No. of mentions</b>
Feeding children	13
Hygiene	11
Children’s health	9
Pregnancy/Motherhood	7
Reafforestation	6
Agriculture in general	3
Importance of education	3
Environmental protection	3
Diarrhoea	1
Poultry	1
Female circumcision	1

### **5.3.8. Women’s Preferences**

The sample of 41 women was asked what their favourite radio programmes were. Several interviewees expressed more than one favourite. ‘News’ emerged as women respondents’ favourite programme (11 mentions), followed closely by the ‘Sunday variety show’ and ‘plays’ (9 each). ‘Songs and music’ received 8 mentions, while ‘Mothers and children’ received 5 mentions, followed by ‘programmes about the war’ (4 mentions).

A number of respondents gave reasons for their preferences (for example, ‘**It’s good to know what’s going on elsewhere**’ and ‘**I like to hear the news about other countries**’), but most did not, and were not prompted.

## **5.4. Factors Affecting Radio Listening for Women**

This section documents the obstacles women face in listening to and concentrating on the radio.

### **5.4.1. Circumstances under which women listen to the radio**

Analysing the circumstances under which rural women in Eritrea listen to the radio is important for an understanding of the contribution radio can make to their lives, and specifically to their education. Rural women normally listen to the radio at home; either indoors or within the precincts of their house or compound. Sometimes they will listen at a neighbour's home. The only other places for women to listen are designated Listening Centres. These are sessions linked to literacy classes which have been recently set-up in some towns and villages, specifically for women to listen in a group to the EMMP programmes. These are, as yet, uncommon, although there are plans for expansion (see Chapter 6).

#### 5.4.1.i. Listening at home

Women respondents repeatedly stressed how little time they had to devote to radio-listening in the home setting. Among those who were habitually relatively attentive (ie. they named previous programmes they had listened to), more than half complained that lack of time, the burden of housework and the noise and distraction of their children impeded their concentration, and limited the amount of time they could spend on listening.

Their problems are illustrated by the following:

**“My radio’s not been on for more than a month. It’s because I have so many children and my husband is out all the time...I listen to songs but I can’t remember which ones. I just can’t pay attention because first one child cries, then another and I can’t concentrate.” – G4**

**“It’s not the batteries that are the problem, it’s the housework.” – A10**

**“We don’t have time to feed ourselves, let alone listen to the radio.” – K4**

**“For us [women], when we listen there are lot of worries, and we are exhausted. Our attention is divided. But for men, they come home and their work’s over, so they can concentrate and grasp better than us.”**

(Female focus group member, Awlietseru)

Out of 29 women who spontaneously gave reasons for not being able to listen to or concentrate on the radio, 18 mentioned time or attention problems. Of the remainder, two mentioned their husband forbidding them to touch the radio, two mentioned sickness, and, interestingly, seven said their own lack of education impeded their ability to listen to and absorb programmes. (This latter reason is examined further below).

#### 5.4.1.ii. Listening at Centres

In order to explore whether or not there was any qualitative difference between home- listening and purposeful group-listening, one group of four women was interviewed who had experienced group listening at an official Listening Centre. This was in the village of Awlietseru, which was, at the time, one of only twenty functioning centres in the whole country. Held in the village school building, the radio listening group was part of a literacy and numeracy class organised by the MoE and aimed specifically at women. Participants were expected to attend five days per week for two hours per evening (4-6pm) for a six month period. In common with the rest of the country, the class in Awlietseru was structured around literacy for one hour (incorporating radio listening twice per week) and one hour of numeracy-work. The radio programmes played during the literacy hour were the EMMP programmes in Tigrinia. Thus, participants, if they had attended regularly, would have listened to two hours per week of educational programmes about Health, Agriculture and Civics over a six month period. According to the four women interviewed, there were 80 women enrolled on the course of which 63 graduated as ‘literate’. The purpose of this in-depth group-interview was to see how women responded to listening in a formal

group; and what, if anything, the group-listening experience added to their comprehension, concentration, learning and enjoyment.

All the respondents who had attended the Listening Centre could recall a relatively large number of the educational topics they had listened to (for example: **'how to make a home garden'**, **'about children's health and expectant mothers' diets'**, **'how if we eat potatoes, eggs and vegetables it's good for our bodies and has vitamins'**, **'how to grow carrots and peppers'**, **'how to grow trees like Eucalyptus'**, **'how we mustn't chop down trees'**). All appeared enthusiastic about the EMMP programmes. Comments included:

**"We learned a lot. It gives a chance for those who've never been to school to get some education."**

**"Although we can't remember the programmes exactly, it helps us in our daily practice."**

**"We hear on these programmes [that it is good] to eat eggs and vegetables, and you do see people going out and buying them. Some people I know try to have at least one egg per week. So we are gaining from it."**

However, the women had found it difficult to attend the classes regularly. Their responsibilities at home made it difficult to be away for two hours every evening for five days a week. One of them said she had to miss three months of the course because one of her children was ill. Another could only attend 'here and there', because she could not always find someone to mind her children. These were typical constraints for most of the participants.

When asked how they compared listening in the class with listening at home, the respondents said that they paid more attention in the class because they did not have **'our children, our work and visitors to distract us'**. However, when asked whether they thought men or women would benefit more from such a listening group, some women thought that men would, because **'even when we're in the class we're worrying about home'**. Although the respondents articulated it obliquely,

there seems also to have been a gender- and age-related communication problem between the women participants and the male class animator. The women called him ‘the Director’ because he was the head-master of the village school. They said that they had questions they would have liked to raise with him, in response to the radio programmes. But **‘we are shy to ask them because he’s an old man – we need to show respect and be shy.’** They also revealed it was only **‘the young ones who answered him.’**

Clearly, the radio programmes prompted questions for these women for which the group situation did not produce satisfactory answers. Furthermore, it would seem that the dynamic in the class was such that women who owned radios dominated the class. One woman from the group said:

**“In fact we only listened to the radio from time to time [in the class] because the women who have radios at home tell the teacher they can listen at home. Also, towards the end of the course, the radio at the centre broke down.”**

## **5.4.2 Attitudinal factors affecting radio listening**

### **5.4.2.i Perception of need to be educated**

A significant proportion of women respondents identified another problem, articulated as an inability or difficulty in understanding the radio because of a lack of formal education. It was something mainly mentioned by older women. For example:

**“Since I have never been to school, I don’t understand the radio.” – A4**

**“I listen from the beginning of *Dimtsi Haffash* [DH] to the end of *Timerti Bradio na Abeti* [EMMP], but since I am not educated I forget it.” – A5**

**“My problem isn’t batteries, it’s ignorance.” – A9**

**“I hear everything through my ears but my heart doesn’t write it. I can’t remember what I heard yesterday because those of us who aren’t educated are morons. Our fathers did not send us to school so that’s why we can’t answer you nicely.” - K5**

**“I listen to the radio but it depends how interesting it is. I like plays because we can grasp them, but serious things can’t be grasped.” – M.S. Adi Baru**

Women also blame their lack of education for not being able to operate the radio: eg.

**“Since we’re uneducated and our husbands don’t show us, we don’t know how to work the radio.” – B4 (Middle-aged woman, Bashari)**

In total, seven out of 41 respondents spontaneously articulated this comprehension problem and ascribed it to their lack of education. Most of these were older women (five out of 41), but two were middle-aged. There seems to be an equation in older women’s minds between education and their own powers of reasoning and general self confidence.

Another example came from a middle-aged interviewee in Awlietseru when she was describing the village Listening Centre she had attended. Talking about the women participants’ reluctance to ask questions to the (older, male) animator, she said:

**“It’s the fault of our upbringing that makes us look down and be shy, but education is for helping us to raise our heads and see straight.”<sup>52</sup>**

Thus, there seems to be a perception among some women that because they have not received formal education, they do not possess sufficient intellect to understand and retain radio content. In the case of the latter respondent, she seems to go further and imply that lack of education gives women an inherent lack of self-confidence, which, in turn impedes them from benefiting directly from the radio because they are too shy to ask questions in the Listening Centres.

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<sup>52</sup> It may not be taking it too far to suggest that the rich symbolism of this statement (‘education is for helping us to raise our heads and see straight’) holds a meaning about the power of education to raise women from feminine submission to a more feminist dignity and self-identity.

In mixed-sex focus group discussions, further evidence was found that radio is perceived, by both women and men, as of greater benefit to those with education. For example, in Kuandaba, Gahtelay and Bashari villages, the following were among the answers to the question ‘What kind of people benefit from/learn best from the radio?’:

**“Radio’s more useful for educated people, for example the word ‘malaria’ [in English] would only be understood by educated people.”** (Middle-aged men)

**“Radio could be effective for people who are educated, but not for us – we don’t pay attention... Younger people find it useful only if they’re educated.”** (4 older traditional midwives)

**“Youths and students are the best listeners because it helps them increase their knowledge and because they’re educated, they’re more interested in what’s going on anyway.”** (6 women of all ages)

**“The educated understand it more – it builds on what they know and they can write down what they hear, to remember it better.”** (20 women of all age groups)

**“It’s the educated ones who gain more, they can understand everything because they know more languages like English and Arabic.”** (4 middle-aged men)

In survey C, ten comments were gathered to the same effect, namely that certain issues or information were difficult to grasp on the radio, for instance:

**“Since our capacity for understanding is low for radio, it’s best to talk about tree enclosures in meetings.”** – (Middle-aged woman, Tsahaflam)

**“A meeting is best for those who don’t have the intelligence of following the radio.”** (Older woman, Awlietseru)

Therefore, there seems to be a general agreement among rural men and women that educated people benefit most from listening to the radio. Since the statistics show that it is predominantly the younger generation, and among these, the males, who have received formal education, it is therefore no surprise that it was the older women in the sample who saw themselves particularly disadvantaged in this respect.

### **5.4.3. Issues around comprehension**

These comprehension issues were put to the test by organising radio listening focus-groups to test comprehension of two typical EMMP educational programmes, and to see whether levels of schooling made any difference<sup>53</sup>. (One was on the topic of malaria (in Tigrinia) and the other on adolescence (in Tigre)).

Technical language in the programmes was a problem for the majority of the respondents. For instance, in the listening group around the malaria programme, not one listener understood the words ‘pupa’, ‘larvae’ or ‘haemoglobin’; and only one understood the word ‘parasite’, even though it was explained in the broadcast – albeit rapidly.

It was also found that complexity of programme-structure and information overload presented problems for the majority of the respondents. Clearly much of the scientific detail was lost on them, or was misunderstood. For example, when asked what the programme had told them about the differences between the two different types of mosquitoes (*Anopheles* and *Culex*) some respondents thought that one was male and the other female, and another group in Kuandaba agreed that ‘one goes to the liver and the other one gives you a headache’. One group said of the two different mosquitoes:

**‘One carries malaria and the other doesn’t, but we don’t know which ones live in clean water and which in dirty water.’** (Kuandaba)

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<sup>53</sup> An ‘educated’ person, according to villager’s meaning was anything from 1 to 7 years of primary schooling. For example, a group of women in Awlietseru who were selected by villagers as ‘highly educated’, had all achieved sixth or seventh grade. No one in any of the case-study villages had more than primary schooling.

Furthermore, one respondent misunderstood the passage about disease transmission and thought the programme had said that malaria was passed on through 'poisoned water and poisoned food.' Another group thought the programme had said that a parasite was a kind of disease. Yet another group were under the impression that the programme had said that 'malaria is transmitted by tuberculosis'. Thus, some of the scientific details were, at best, confusing and at worse misleading.

Another problem for listeners was the *quantity* of information given. Taking the malaria script as an example, (see Appendix 5) there are up to 13 messages about the disease contained in the opening poem alone. They can be summarised roughly as follows:

1. *Malaria can attack you anywhere*
2. *It's a killer disease*
3. *It's common in the Lowlands and semi-Lowlands*
4. *Anopheles mosquito is the transmitter*
5. *When you get bitten you will get a fever and perhaps die*
6. *Malaria stops human development*
7. *The mosquitoes live in stagnant water*
8. *They transmit the disease from sick to healthy people*
9. *Malaria is a small microbe*
10. *Mosquitoes feed on human blood*
11. *They pass through different stages of development (larva, pupa then flying insect)*
12. *The masses must rise up against the disease*
13. *If you get malaria you must go to the doctor*

These points are then expanded in the sections of the programme which follow. Further details are added about the manner in which the disease is transmitted and how it enters and affects the body. The programme amounts to a detailed and relatively scientific piece about the whole process by which malaria is transmitted, contracted, treated and prevented. The tests showed that absorption of all the scientific points of the piece was beyond any of the listeners, and, indeed, would probably be beyond anyone without medical or biological training.

Wording that is inappropriate - as opposed to incomprehensible - is another problem. For example, some listeners are confused by the way dates are given over the radio. Some respondents said they normally count days, weeks and months according to the Ge'ez calendar<sup>54</sup>, whereas **'our government [i.e. the radio] counts with a different calendar and we get confused'** (Older woman, Kuandaba). For some listeners the speed with which the broadcasters speak was another problem. For example, in response to the Tigrinia poem about malaria, one group said:

**"The poem's contents is not new for us, but our problem is that when it passes quickly from one sentence to the next we can't remember the last sentence."** (Kuandaba)

Monotony is another issue. On-air lectures lasting up to 15 minutes, delivered by a single speaker with little modulation in the voice are not uncommon; the adolescence programme is a case in point. During the test sessions, it was clear from listeners' restlessness that parts of some programmes were monotonous. This, again, no doubt affects concentration.

Despite these difficulties, it was found that there was not a great qualitative difference between the levels of comprehension of the those who were and were not schooled. The main difference between them was in their level of articulacy when talking about the programmes. This was demonstrated by general facility of speech, slightly wider vocabulary and the amount of information they volunteered. Not surprisingly, the most articulate were those who were schooled, the younger women, and the men of all ages; these groups also tended to be the most self-confident.

For example, one of the programmes tested was about malaria, and contained some technical words given in English, such as : 'red blood cells', 'oxygen' and 'haemoglobin' which were not explained by the broadcaster. Would those with schooling find these easier to understand than the 'uneducated' group? It was found

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<sup>54</sup> The Ge'ez or Orthodox calendar used in Eritrea and Ethiopia differs from the Gregorian (or Western) calendar and consists of twelve months of thirty days each and a thirteenth month of five days. It is seven years and eight months behind the Western calendar. Officially, the Western calendar is used in Eritrea but many villagers still use the Orthodox one.

that both groups demonstrated more or less *partial* knowledge, as is shown by the following:

**Researcher - Q: “What are oxygen, red blood cells and haemoglobin?”**

**‘Uneducated’ group (4 middle-aged women with no schooling) - A:**

**“Oxygen is a transmitter of energy, and something we take in and out. Haemoglobin, we don’t know. Red blood cells are the eggs of the mosquito.”**

**‘Educated’ group (4 younger women who’d received three years of schooling) – A: “Oxygen is an injection which you take to give you**

**energy and it’s also air. Haemoglobin is the transmitter of malaria. Red blood cells means the blood in the liver.”**

By the same token, there seemed to be little difference between the two groups in the comprehension of new words or of figures. One might have expected people with schooling to have a greater facility for retaining foreign words or numbers; but no difference was found here, either. For instance, after the malaria programme, groups were asked what they remembered about the two types of mosquito mentioned in the programme (*Anopheles* and *Culex*). A group of four ‘educated’ men remembered *Culex* as ‘Kuky’. An ‘uneducated’ group of four women remembered *Anopheles* as ‘Aladdin’.

On numbers, the Tigre programme about adolescence enumerated the number of eggs produced in a woman’s body (six million – according to the broadcast<sup>55</sup>), but only one out of the six groups tested retained the exact figure, and this group was a mix of schooled and unschooled men.

#### **5.4.4. Issues related to Relevance**

When the malaria and the adolescence programmes were tested on listening groups, it was found that most people already knew most of the information they contained.

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<sup>55</sup> Note that the information in the Eritrean broadcast does not agree with the Royal Society of Medicine’s Health Encyclopaedia which says: ‘At birth the ovaries contain about *a million* immature ova’ (Youngson, 2001:548)

When asked whether there was anything in the programme that was new for them they said none, except for some of the technical words. For instance, people had few problems enumerating the main practical messages of the programme (e.g. malaria can weaken and kill; you get malaria through mosquito bites; prevention is better than cure; do not allow stagnant water near the home; the symptoms are shivering, rheumatism, lack of appetite and pallor; and so on). In some cases, listeners in the test-groups volunteered their own information in addition, such as how to treat the symptoms of malaria.

There were similar findings for the adolescence programme tested. The main points of the piece were:

- 1. Changes happen between the ages of 13 and 18;*
- 2. Adolescents tend to have emotional problems and conflicts with their families;*
- 3. Parents must give guidance;*
- 4. Pregnancy occurs when sperm meets egg;*
- 5. Breasts and menstruation develop in a girl;*
- 6. Shoulders widen and beard growth starts for boys;*
- 7. Certain 'spices' in the body cause these changes.*

But listeners already knew the main points of the piece from their own experience. As one listener in Gahtelay said: **'We've all been through this stage ourselves, so it has nothing new for us'**.

## **5.5. The Role of Radio in Women's Lives**

### **5.5.1. Entertainment, Information and Education**

Survey A found that it is for news and entertainment that women particularly value radio. Purely educational programmes also have a respectable following; particularly

among the younger age-group. Thus, for rural women in Eritrea, radio has the three Reithian properties<sup>56</sup>:

**“There’s nothing that the radio doesn’t do. It educates, it informs and it entertains us.” - A8**

The focus groups confirmed this view; all the groups conducted identified these three properties in radio. They also identified a number of other properties. For example some said radio could be used as a timekeeper, as a morale booster and as a messenger (birth, marriage and death announcements used to be carried on DH); and as something to keep one company, to stimulate the imagination and be a window on the world:

**“A radio makes you see what you can’t see with your eyes. We’re stuck in our houses, but through the radio we can imagine where other women are, and what’s happening in the world.”** (Women’s focus group, Bashari)

So, radio is valued for all these attributes. But in order to understand what contribution radio is making to women’s education and development it is necessary to unpack those elements which women may be gaining from radio; and to analyse what place radio occupies in relation to other media and other sources of education and information in rural women’s daily lives.

### **5.5.2 Radio as an Information Source**

In order to find out what role radio plays in relation to other sources of information, a series of focus groups was conducted with a total of 93 women and 11 men, around seven different news and information items, as follows:

- News about the war with Yemen
- The Eritrean Constitution
- Oral Rehydration Solution (ORS)

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<sup>56</sup> Lord Reith declared the BBC's mission must be to "inform, educate and entertain... [and] bring the best of everything to the greatest number of homes". *The Ghost of Lord Reith* Monday July 7, 2003 <http://MediaGuardian.co.uk>

- HIV/AIDS
- Contraception
- Chicken disease
- Immunization

The results are shown in the bar charts below. They show which information sources are the most common and deemed to be most important for different types of information. The range of sources, as mentioned spontaneously by focus group members, were:

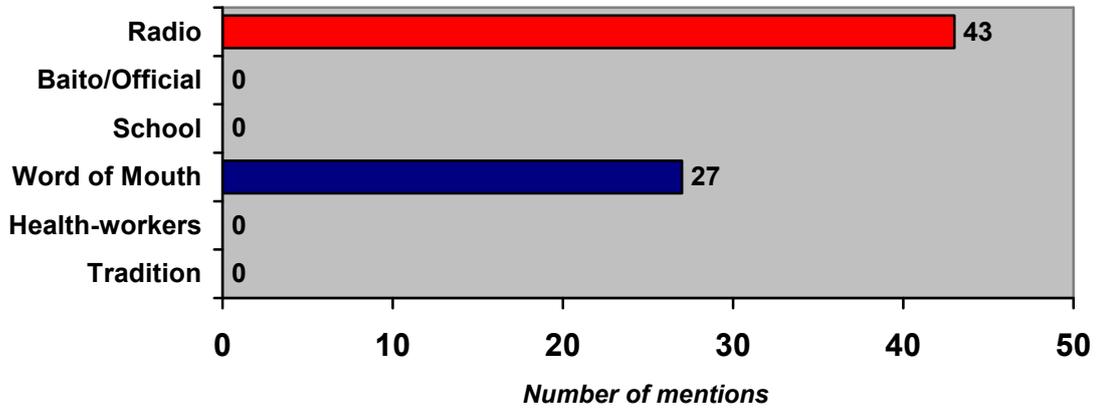
- radio,
- word of mouth,
- Baito or official (government sponsored) public meeting,
- health-workers and/or the local clinic,
- school(s) and
- mothers/tradition<sup>57</sup>.

Some respondents cited more than one source of information and some cited none. They show what types of information radio typically communicates, in contrast with those types of information communicated more usefully and more frequently by other media/information sources.

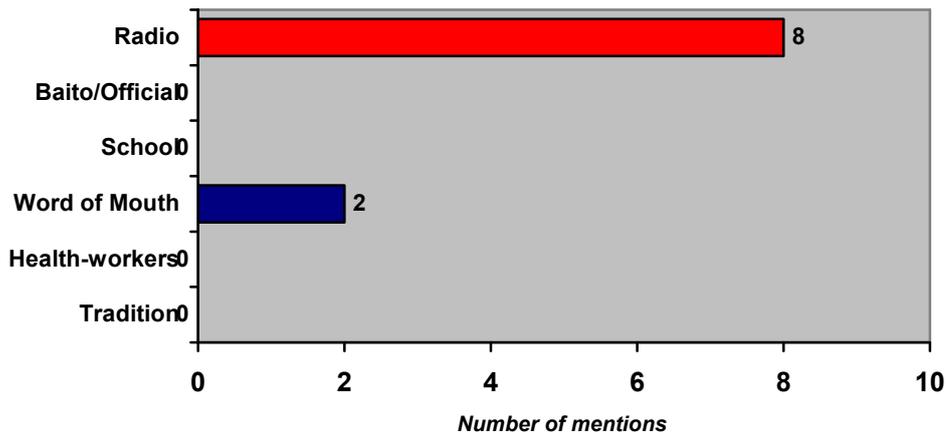
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<sup>57</sup> A few other information sources were mentioned beyond the six shown here, but by only two or three people. They were therefore not included, for the sake of clarity. For the record, they were 'children' (mentioned as a source of information by two older people) and 'books' (mentioned by three school pupils).

1a: Women's Sources of News (War with Yemen)

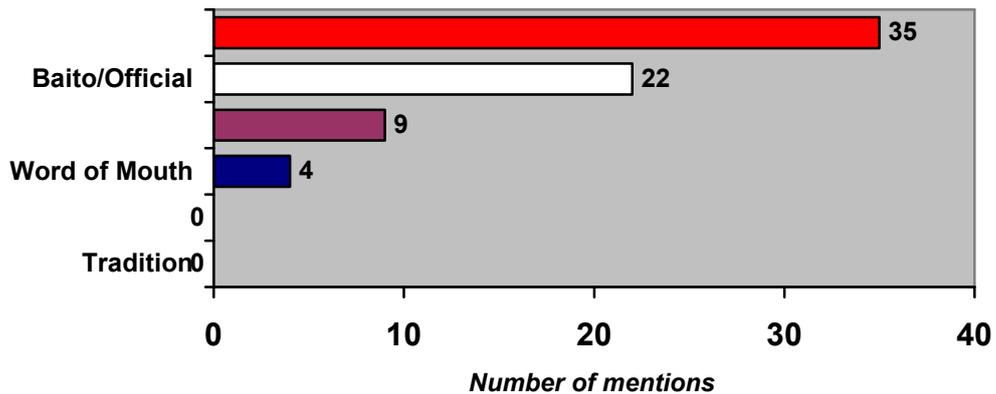


1b: Men's Sources of News (War with Yemen)

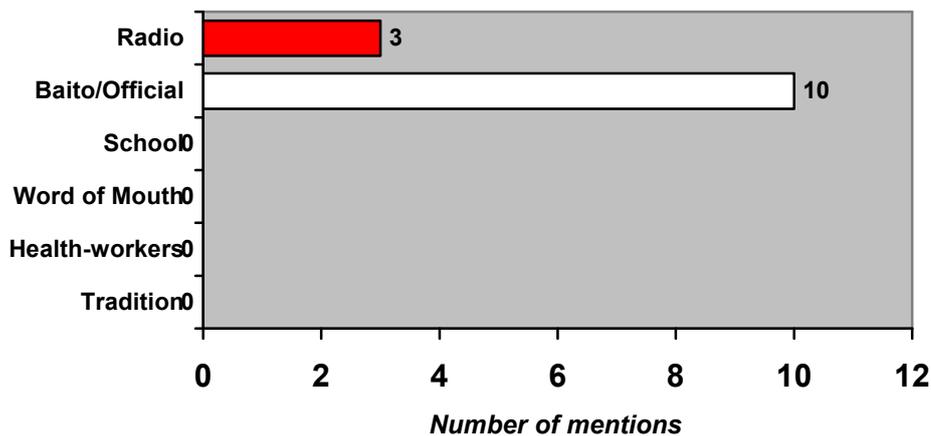


The results show, firstly, that radio is the only *mass* medium of relevance to rural people of both sexes. Secondly, the results show that radio is especially important for news of a national, or international type, particularly if it is fresh news, such as the dispute with Yemen. This holds true for both women and men. Word of mouth comes second. (See bar charts 1a and 1 b, above.)

2a: Women's Sources of Information re. Eritrean Constitution

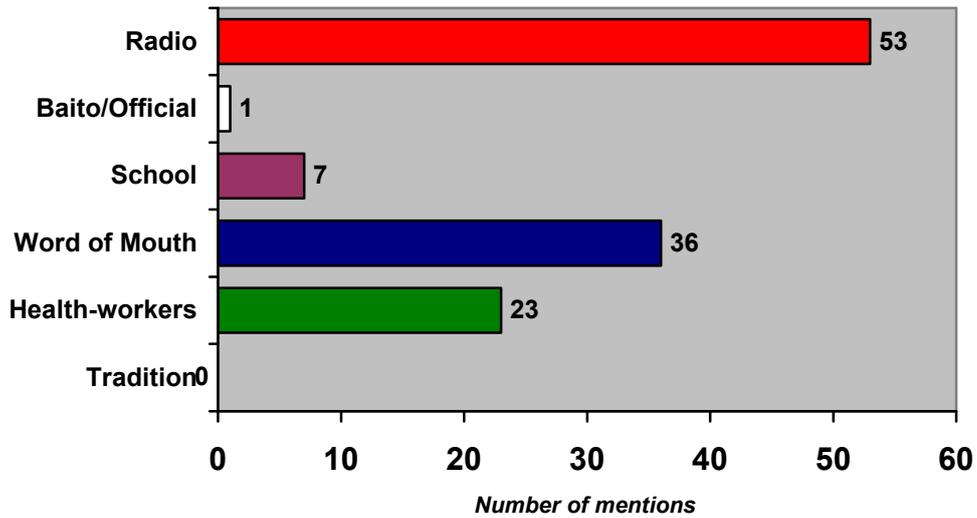


2b: Men's Sources of Information re. Eritrean Constitution

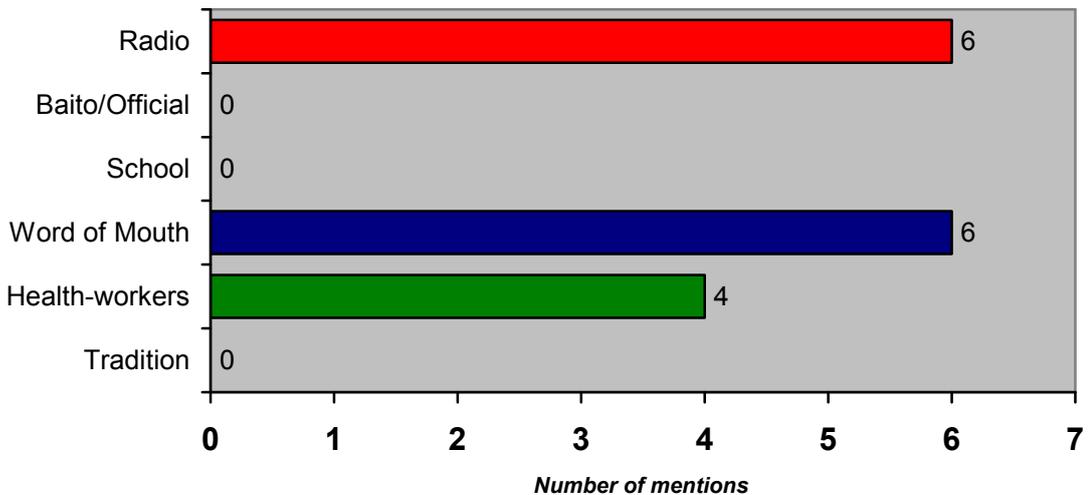


By contrast, news of and information about the new Eritrean Constitution seems to have been communicated more by radio in the case of women and more by public meetings in the case of men. This probably reflects the fact that women normally take a smaller part in public life than men, and are less likely to attend public meetings, and are therefore more likely to have heard about the Constitution through radio. But again, on this subject of national (as opposed to local) importance, radio makes a strong showing compared to other possible information routes. (See bar charts 2a and 2b, above.)

3a: Women's Sources of Information re. HIV/AIDS



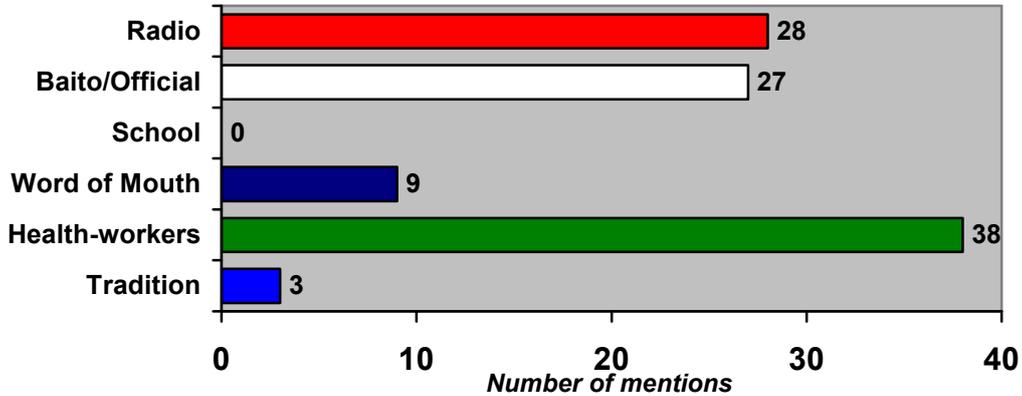
3b: Men's Sources of Information re. HIV/AIDS



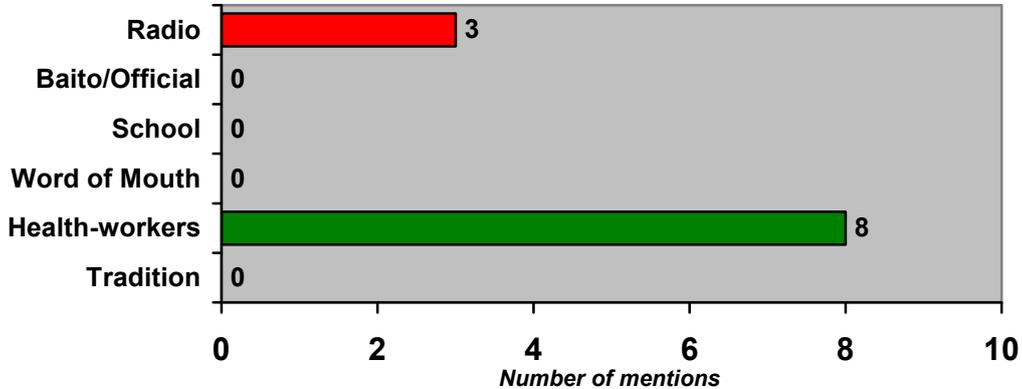
For information about HIV/AIDS, radio is important for both sexes, and is the leading source for women, while men rated it equally important as word of mouth. Health-workers or information from the local clinic came in third place for both sexes. This looks counter-intuitive at first glance but probably partly reflects the fact that clinics are scarce in most rural areas<sup>58 59</sup>. (See charts 3a and 3b, above.)

<sup>58</sup> According to UNICEF 'There is one primary health care facility for every 16,000 to 19,000 people...It has been estimated (very imprecisely) that 54 percent of Eritreans live more than 20kms from the nearest health station' (UNICEF 1994).

4a: Women's Sources of Information re. Immunization



4b: Men's Sources of Information re. Immunization

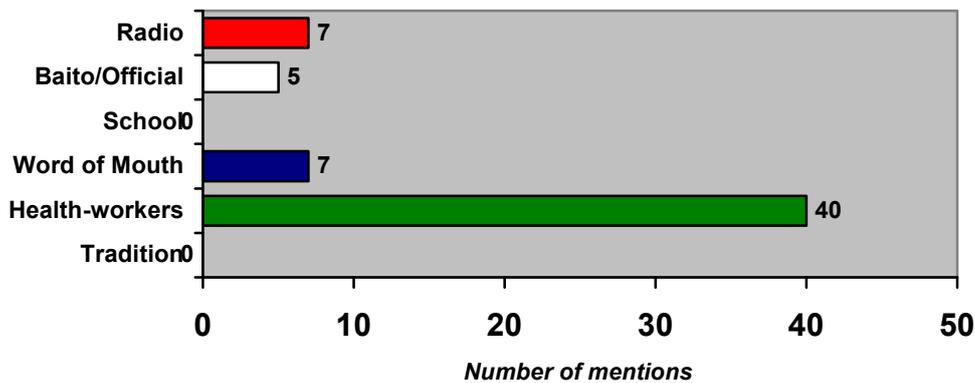


Turning to the topics which were communicated better by *other* sources than by radio, it can be seen (above) that for information about immunization, radio ranks second after the health clinic. The reason for this is probably that immunization has a relatively large amount of coverage on radio but that it covers the topic only in a general sense; for example, explaining which diseases immunization can prevent and for which age-groups, whereas *local* information about where and when to attend immunization clinics is more readily and more usefully given by local clinics and

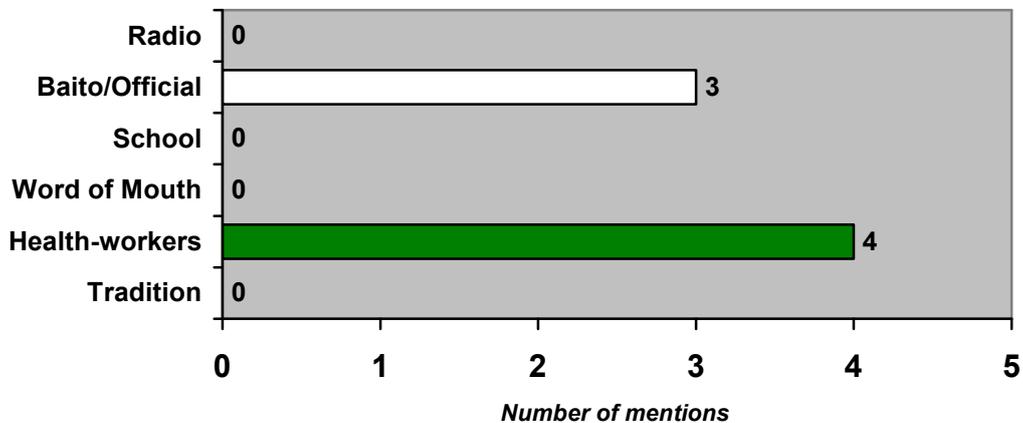
<sup>59</sup> See IRIN for information on rates of HIV/AIDS infection in Eritrea <http://www.aegis.com/news/irin/2002/IR020709.html>

health-workers. The Eritrean Ministry of Health also organises mass immunization days which are publicised through messages sent to Baito heads, thus explaining the relative importance women respondents gave to the Baito/Official/Meeting category.

5a: Women's Sources of Information re. ORS



5b: Men's Sources of Information re. ORS



Radio makes a much lower showing on the subjects of ORS, contraception and chicken disease (see tables 5a-7b above and below). On all three topics radio's importance as a source is dwarfed by word of mouth, official meetings, health-workers and the influence of tradition and family. These are all subjects treated on radio, especially on EMMP, but the number of times they are featured is relatively low compared with news items. Therefore respondents may easily have missed the programmes. Another interpretation might be that radio may just not be so apt at

communicating this sort of information. The way these subjects are handled on the radio may not be relevant or sufficiently memorable.

The issue of contraception (see 6a & b overleaf) is interesting for being more communicated by official meetings, word of mouth and by radio, than by clinics or health workers. At first sight this is surprising, but it probably reflects most women's lack of interest in the topic. Very few women see any need for contraception. A significant minority (20 out of 93) said they had no knowledge of it *at all*. Among those who did, some typical responses included the following:

**'This isn't our problem. Let the young worry about it. Nature balances it out – God takes his share'** - focus-group Awlietseru

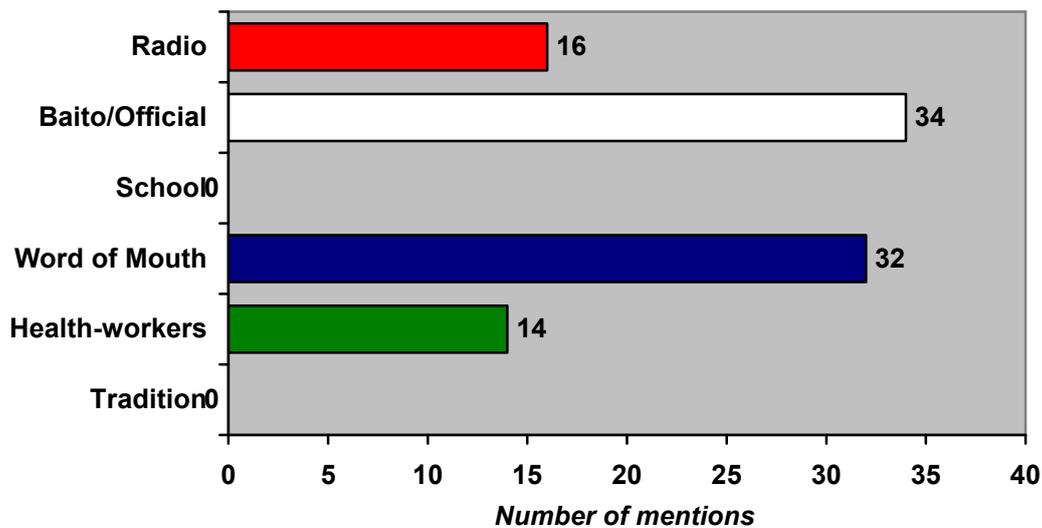
**'It's best to accept what St. Mary gives you'** – focus group Kuandaba

**'If we plan [our families] and lose some of the babies we deliver, what are we to do? Time passes and this is bad'** – focus group Kuandaba

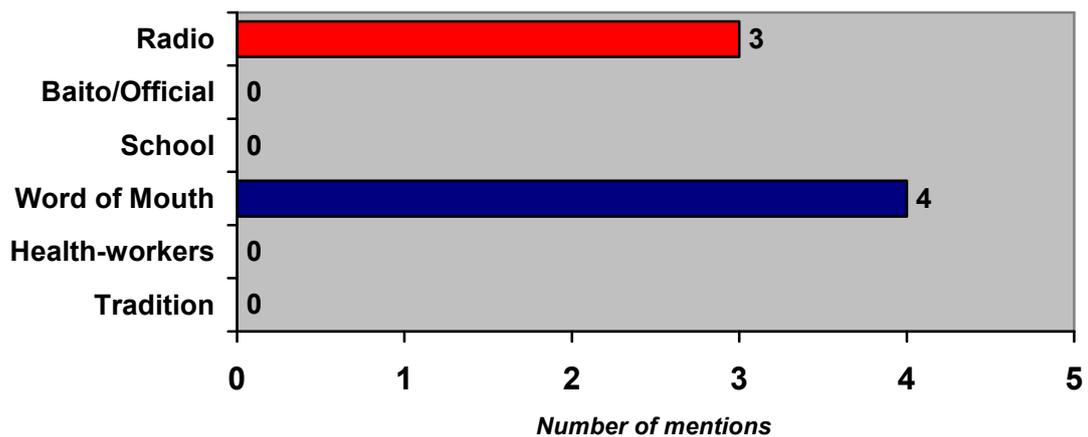
**'It's good to have children – they are our wealth, like houses and cars.'** - focus group Gahtelay.

The general picture is that women seem not to be asking for contraception and do not see health posts (such as they exist) as a source of such information. As one would expect, contraception is less communicated by radio than by word of mouth. The prominence of official meetings, in the table, is explained by one village in the sample (Awlietseru) having recently had a public seminar organised by the NUEW about contraception and reproductive health, thereby slightly weighting the figures in favour of public meetings.

6a: Women's Sources of Information re. Contraception



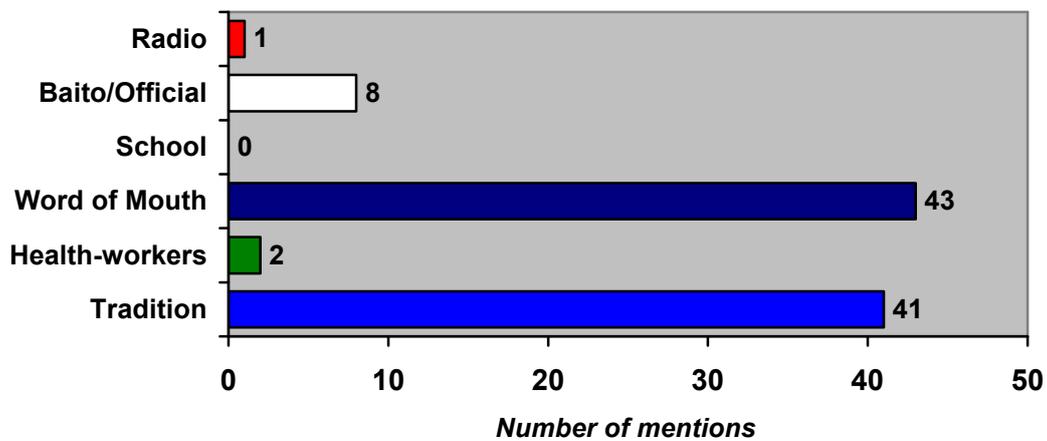
6b: Men's Sources of Information re. Contraception



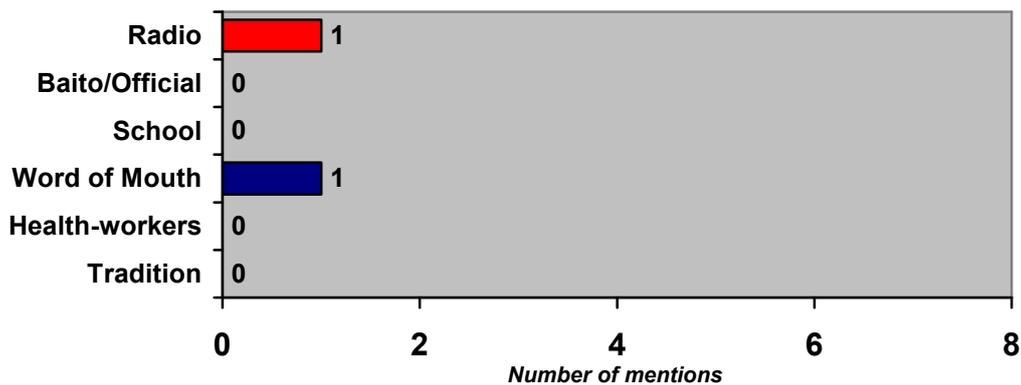
The result for the topic of chicken disease shows a stark contrast with the others (see 7a & b overleaf). Here, word of mouth and the advice of mothers and/or 'tradition' predominate. If the results for men and women are compared, knowledge of and interest in poultry is clearly a matter for women. In discussion with women's focus groups, a number of comments were received which show women's strong interest in the subject. For example:

**"If you know a cure [for chicken disease] please tell us! We have [government sponsored] seminars here about a lot of things but no one has bothered about chicken disease. We'd like to know about this. Chickens are our concern."** (Women-headed households, Kuandaba)

7a: Women's Sources of Information re. Chickens



7b: Men's Sources of Information re. Chickens



Women seem to have an unmet information need relating to the raising of poultry, and do not seem to be able to obtain this from any official quarter, whether on radio or through government-sponsored meetings, relying instead on the advice of 'our mothers'<sup>60</sup>.

Overall, radio emerges as an important source of information about the world beyond the village (breaking news, matters of national interest and so on), and less important

<sup>60</sup> In research on farmers' information needs in Hagaz, Eritrea, Garforth (2001:7) notes farmers' general difficulty in accessing information from agricultural extension agents and also mentions that radio is not perceived to be a useful source of information on agriculture either. Here, the reason given for radio not being useful is that 'there is no regular agricultural programming on the radio so it is difficult to use it systematically as an information source'.

on issues of day to day concern, such as health needs and women's concerns with poultry, where local sources emerge more strongly. Radio also seems ill-equipped to convey information which is detailed, nuanced, or locally specific (e.g. particular information about immunization or contraception). In the Eritrean context, it also seems to play a secondary role to official meetings whenever there is government-sponsored information to be communicated. However, the results suggest that radio plays a role in keeping women informed about matters in the public sphere (e.g. the new Constitution and in raising awareness or HIV/AIDS) which they might not otherwise hear about directly, in contrast to men, who are more likely to attend public meetings and to pick up information beyond the confines of the village.

The question arises: does radio-listening correlate with a better informed rural population? It was found, for example, that those women who had no idea at all about what contraception was, tended not to have radios. It was also noticeable that those who were least well-informed about HIV/AIDS were the ones without radios. It is tempting to conclude, from this, that listening to the radio correlates with greater knowledge. But it must be emphasised that no methodologically rigorous test was conducted on this question. In any case, it does not necessarily hold true that if all respondents had radios they would be better informed on all subjects. For example, it did not seem to hold true for knowledge about the Constitution, which was relatively good among even those without radios, probably due to a spate of recent government-sponsored public meetings all around the country.

At most, it may be asserted that people who listen to radio tend to be better informed on subjects which are best, and most typically, communicated by radio (eg. breaking news, matters of national interest and so on). However, even this assertion is open to the objection that these people (or their spouses) may be slightly better-off economically, have more links with life outside the village, may be literate to some degree, and would therefore know or enquire about these subjects anyway. In which case, radio ownership just comes with the terrain. All that can be said with confidence is that people with radios tend to be better-informed, but this is not necessarily a causal relationship.

### **5.5.3. Radio as a Source of Education**

In the focus groups numerous comments were received to the effect that radio was thought to be educational. Respondents were asked in what respects, if any, they perceived radio as something that they could learn from. Firstly radio is perceived as carrying useful subject-matter, which can, in theory, be applied to daily life:

**“Radio’s educational, like the children’s and hygiene programmes. If we followed it properly it would be good for our lives.”** (Gahtelay)

**“It educates us about AIDS and other diseases like malaria. The education we get is an advantage for us.”** (Awlietseru)

**“Radio’s educational, for example you know what to do about disease.”**  
(Awlietseru – men)

Secondly, it is thought to confer general ‘enlightenment’ and knowledge of the world:

**“It’s a pity we can’t afford radios, if we had them you would find us very enlightened and educated because the radio educates.”** – (Bashari)

**“It helps you know the world, especially if you know different languages, you can master the whole world.”** (Awlietseru)

Finally, radio is perceived as capable of conveying intellectual subject-matter:

**“You learn science from the radio - it’s educational.”** – (Gahtelay, men)

**“You can learn a language from the radio.”** – (Bashari)

However, comparing radio with education gained at school, most of those who expressed an opinion felt that school was superior to the radio. This seemed to have something to do with acquiring a skill – for example, literacy:

**“It’s better to go to school because you learn to read and write, but with radio you only listen.”** – (Focus group – Bashari)

Otherwise, it was felt by some to be more about the retention of knowledge:

**“If you go to school you don’t forget what you learn, whereas you forget what you learn from the radio.”** – (Focus group – Gahtelay)

#### **5.5.4. Issues of Learning, Relevance and Engagement**

Many respondents asserted that radio was educational and the results from the surveys show that the education channel (EMMP) has a respectable following among women. So what had respondents learned from the radio?

##### 5.5.4.i. New knowledge or making sense of old?

Accepting that a large part of learning is the acquisition and retention of information and knowledge that is *new* (Rogers, 1992), respondents were asked what was new for them in particular educational radio programmes. It proved difficult to find many informants who volunteered precise examples of new learning, although one or two testimonies were gathered: for example, the Listening Centre group in Awlietseru said that they had learned an interesting fact about menstruation on the radio:

**‘If there was anything new, it was about menstruation... We believed no tea [should be given] to menstruating women because we believed it increased the flow, but on the radio it said it replaced lost fluid. When we heard that we all laughed and were amazed.’**

From the tested malaria and adolescence programmes, listeners said they had learned new ‘English’ words like ‘*Anopheles*’ and ‘pupa’ for the first time. But again, when asked for their responses to the EMMP’s educational programmes, almost all listeners said that there was *not* a lot that was new to them. As several of the respondents said, diseases like malaria and a life-stage like adolescence are ‘things everyone has experienced’.

However, though many respondents had difficulty specifying which new *knowledge* they had gained from radio, it is clear from the focus groups on information sources (see section 5.5.2 above) that a significant amount of new *information* is conveyed to them by radio (e.g. AIDS information, current and civil affairs, news of the world, immunization, for example) because respondents indicated that it was on radio that they had usually heard this information for the first time. Also, a number of members of the listening test-groups asserted that ‘the information was not new to them because they had heard it on the radio before.’ Thus, radio is clearly the source for a significant amount of new information, despite the fact that respondents did not necessarily equate this with new knowledge, nor did they always pinpoint that radio was the actual, only or most important source of that information. Despite this, respondents were quite enthusiastic about the programmes and asserted they *were* ‘educational’, as previously noted. So, paradoxically, respondents do not seem to be learning much that is new, yet they do perceive themselves to be gaining educationally, in some way.

Given this paradox, perhaps the ‘education’ listeners are gaining should be viewed not just as new facts, but as an aid to thinking, remembering and assimilating facts and concepts. It could further be argued that radio seems to be giving listeners a framework for thinking about certain issues. It may be partly for these reasons that listeners perceive radio to be educational despite claiming not to be learning a great deal that is new. Listeners seemed to find it useful to be reminded of, or to be presented with, information in an ordered way. For example, in relation to an agricultural programme about fruit cultivation, respondents said:

**“Yes, I had heard it before from the Ministry of Agriculture, but the radio clarified it.”**

**“I had heard it before as well but the radio increased my knowledge.”**

(Listening Centre group – 4 women: Awlietseru)

Also, groups wanted more reminders and repeats of programmes and, if possible for subjects to be treated in more depth:

**“It would be good if there was more [on the radio] about [menstruation]. If the programme was repeated it would be good, even if they don’t tell us anything different.”** (Listening Class group – Awlietseru)

Radio seems to organise information and to validate it. Listeners appear to especially value it if it reinforces what they already do. For example:

**“The programme I heard about mother and child health added to my confidence about my previous knowledge.”** (Mrs. Geddai Solomon from Nefasit, quoted in MOEb, 1995)

Radio also seems to sanction information because it puts it in the public arena. For example, a woman in Awlietseru said:

**“Although we know about monthly bleeding it [the radio programme] was the first time we had heard about it openly.”**

Another woman in Foro (Akele Guzay province) said:

**“Radio has made subjects like sex and childbirth much easier to talk about compared with the past when those subjects were taboo.”<sup>61</sup>**

Radio even seems to make certain information more official; for example one woman from Awlietseru said:

**“Many women were surprised to hear it [ i.e. advice about drinking tea during menstruation]. Now they don’t prevent their daughters from having tea [during their periods]. Even if they don’t fully believe it, they wouldn’t dare oppose drinking tea completely.”**

which shows that there is a perception that to some extent the ‘word of the radio is law’. Thus, we find that radio seems to be helping to educate listeners on two counts: providing some new information but, more importantly, being a kind of aid for assimilating and validating both new and old information in listeners’ minds.

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<sup>61</sup> This testimony was recorded by the researcher on a previous visit to Eritrea, in 1994.

#### 5.5.4.ii. Relevant education and information?

What are women's educational and informational needs? When asked whether they had any need for education, most women respondents interpreted this as a question about schooling for adults and government-run literacy and numeracy classes, for which they had little or no desire. Some typical responses were as follows:

**“We don't dream about better education because we have no time and lots of work with children.”** – Focus group, Awlietseru

**“If they [the authorities] tell us to go, then we'll go, but we don't see the point.”** – Focus group, Gahtelay

Thus, formal education for women is viewed as a diversion from the real business of life, namely productive and reproductive work. This is also borne out by the high drop-outs rates at literacy classes (see Chapter 3).

At the same time, women do seem to value education *per se* (e.g. **“We curse our parents for not sending us to school.”** (Focus group – Awlietseru); **“Our parents didn't send us to school – they are to be blamed.”** – A5; **“An educated person has eyes but an uneducated person is blind.”** – (Older woman, Gahtelay)) and they seem to desire 'enlightenment' *in some way*, which is mainly articulated as a desire for information and/or knowledge about the problems of every day life.

The poultry question (see above, section 5.5.2) is a case showing that women have a need for information about chicken disease which is unfulfilled. When focus groups were asked what they did when their chickens were ill, most of them said they followed traditional remedies (for example, giving hens oil and rue), but they would like to know about other, more effective treatments. A number even said they had tried 'pills' recommended by the Ministry of Agriculture, and even 'Panadol', but they had not worked. Only one respondent said she had gained any information about chicken disease from the radio, even though the subject of poultry rearing had recently been aired on the EMMP channel, to which a significant proportion of respondents said they tuned regularly. Either the programmes had not been heard,

or they had been heard and not deemed relevant. Either way, radio seems not to be fulfilling women's requirements on this issue.

Again, in survey C, radio programmes seemed to be offering advice on subjects which interest women generally, but seemed not to be addressing their specific problems and questions. For instance, after listening to a programme about soil erosion, one woman (in Adi Ogbayis) said that it was not erosion which was the problem in her kitchen garden, but lack of water in the dry season: **“how to build reservoirs?, how to conserve water? – these are our problems.”** In another village, Foro, after hearing a programme about the general role of a midwife at childbirth (cutting the umbilical cord etc.), a woman said that in her local area, there was a belief that a woman's abdomen should be rubbed during labour: **“Is this practice good or bad?”** she wanted to know. Furthermore: **“Why do women's ankles swell during pregnancy and is it dangerous?.”** These were questions that the radio programme did not cover.

#### 5.5.4.iii Dialoguing/Engaging with radio

Not being able to question, dialogue or take issue with a radio programme is a problem. The examples quoted, of women's queries on practical aspects of pregnancy and soil erosion/water conservation, were provoked by radio programmes which were designed to be informative, but, in both cases, the programmes raised new issues in listeners' minds to which they were not able to obtain answers to their satisfaction. In another example, it was found that women were intensely interested in a radio education topic, about aspects of breastfeeding, but they took issue with one of the points made; namely that breastfeeding immediately after birth helps stop bleeding and helps void the placenta. During listener tests of this programme among 36 women in 12 villages (survey C), many women strongly questioned this advice:

**“How can you give your breast while the placenta's not out yet - without ensuring your own life? You have to be mentally at peace to breast-feed.”** (Adi-Logo)

**“I’ve never heard this before and I don’t think it would be possible at all. Midwives can say as much as they like – even on the radio - I don’t believe them.”** (Khe Khor)

Another controversial programme, this time about tree enclosures, elicited similar reaction: keen interest, but questions raised about the contents:

**“What’s the use of putting it on the radio? We know government programmes and what the radio says is for our own good, but our husbands have to cut wood for ploughs and we need to feed our animals. The government should create other jobs if they want us to have tree enclosures because we would have to abandon farming.”**

(Woman from Mbeito)

Even when given the chance to engage with issues on the radio, through an animator at a Listening Centre, it was found that some women feel too constrained, for cultural and gender-related reasons, to do so:

Researcher: **“Does he [the animator] give you a chance to ask questions?”**

Member of Listening Centre group (Awlietseru): **“He has a book, he asks us to raise any questions, which the young ones do a bit, but we have questions we are shy to ask.”**

Thus, even though the radio may be treating topics which are of genuine interest, it is difficult for individual listeners, particularly women, to engage or take issue with the topics treated, to raise specific questions, or to explore subjects in greater depth.

#### **5.5.5. Issues related to Attitude and Behaviour Change**

One of the declared purposes of the Eritrean educational broadcasters is to ‘teach them [the population] gradually how to leave behind harmful beliefs and traditions’ (MOEb, 1995) – in other words to bring about behaviour change. So, what evidence

can be found of attitude and/or behaviour change among rural women as a result of radio?

#### 5.5.5.i Conditions for behaviour change

When Listening Centre focus group members were asked about the advice on the radio about hygiene and nutrition, several respondents were quite clear about how difficult it was to put the radio's advice into practice: one woman in Mbeito said,

**“I know the radio says to eat and drink more to increase my breast milk, and if possible I eat injera and sauce, maybe sometimes with meat in it, but mostly it's whatever I can get: ‘suwa’ (a local beer), boiled barley and water.”**

This difficulty was echoed by a woman from Adi Logo:

**“We can't eat what the radio recommends. We don't have it.”**

And another from Kuandaba said:

**“The radio tells us how to take care of children; keep them clean, change their clothes, give them eggs, vegetables, porridge and fats, but we've never practiced it because of lack of cash.” K12**

Several other women said that weaning a baby at six months (as recommended on the radio) was possible for the rich, who can afford good food for babies, but they, being poor, carried on breast feeding for up to two years.

However, a few examples of behaviour change were found, in direct response to the radio, especially where listeners are convinced of the usefulness of something, and the change of behaviour entails no extra cost in terms of money or effort. The giving of fluids during menstruation has already been noted; another example is a respondent called L.A. of Adiquala who said:

**“Before, when I boiled green vegetables and corn I threw the water away, but when I heard it was useful on the radio, I felt confident to cook with it and I heard through chatting with friends that they are doing the same.” (MOE, 1994)**

#### 5.5.5.ii Confirming new behaviours

Another situation in which behaviour change would appear to be more likely is when the radio confirms something that individuals may have already considered doing. This was observed during survey C, in response to a radio campaign encouraging mothers not to expel their first milk - colostrum - (as per tradition ) but to give it to their newborns. One of the 18 respondents surveyed after the campaign said:

**“We used to wait and give the breast on the third day – it’s a problem because the breast is swollen and painful, so now we hear it on the radio, we really regret our past practices because it’s much better to give the breast quickly. Anyway, it’s very hard to get rid of the first milk because it’s thick. It needs a baby to suck.” – Woman from Adi Logo**

Clearly this woman had been considering feeding her baby the first milk anyway, because it seemed more practical to do so; perhaps she was already doing it. This, again, is an example of the radio validating or sanctioning an idea, which then increases the chance of it being put into practice.

Furthermore, if other people are adopting a new behaviour, there seems to be more chance of an individual taking it up. In the following quote, L.N. from Mbeito did not have a radio herself but had started advocating immediate breast-feeding because other women birth attendants told her what had been advised on the radio:

**“We used to breast-feed on the 3<sup>rd</sup> day. But now we’ve changed our habits because of the radio. I don’t have one, but other women helpers tell me. We also heard not to give sugar and butter to the newborn because it gives it a stomach ache. We give the colostrum because it’s**

**immediate feeding now. We used to think it was dirty, but not any more. No harm seems to come to the baby.”**

The fact that this new behaviour had been tried and found to do no harm is probably also important in terms of behaviour-change to this individual.

However, when a practice or belief is very ingrained, it is clear that radio will not always convince. Several informants in the same breast-feeding campaign survey were aware of what was recommended on the radio, but were more convinced by tradition and their own experience:

**“I heard on the radio about giving the breast immediately. But I breastfeed after the 3<sup>rd</sup> day. I follow what my mother told me to do.”** – Tsahaflam

**“I get rid of the colostrum because it’s hot and dirty. I don’t follow what the radio says... The radio tells us to give solid food to our babies at six months but I give it after a year. If the child cooperated after six months I would do it, but he doesn’t.”** – Awlietseru

It appears that listeners retain what they want to hear or that which accords with their own practice. For example, almost every respondent in the breast-feeding survey had retained the ‘breast is best’ message, because, as one woman from Adi Koteyo put it, **‘the radio confirms what our mothers taught us’**. But when the radio does not coincide with beliefs, the impact of the message is more problematic:

**“The radio says breast is best, better than a bottle and about keeping the breast clean and something about feeding babies which I’ve forgotten. .. We take out the first milk because our breasts have been closed for nine months, so the first milk isn’t healthy.”** – Adi Baru

### 5.5.5.iii Gradual change

If anything can change tradition it would seem that it is the passage of time and the gradual adoption of new ideas.

**“I don’t accept the old ways, such as giving the baby sugar. I like the new information on the radio. I tried to go for medical checkups when I was pregnant.”** – Young woman, Mbeito

Radio seems to accompany and to encourage that which is new and a rejection of ‘the old ways’. It also seems to be associated with youth rather than age: one old woman said something particularly pertinent: when asked who she thought radio was for, she said:

**“It’s for those who are as young as the radio itself.”** - K6

Another significant comment came from a middle-aged woman from Awlietseru, who said:

**“It’s not only that we learn more, but radio’s changing us. For example when we heard about menstruation we were all shy, but now our shyness has gone away... Even now with family planning, the young people are adopting it.”**

Thus, as these last quotations imply, we find that new practices such as family planning, seeing the doctor instead of a traditional healer, abandoning some of ‘the old ways’, losing ‘shyness’ and gaining ‘enlightenment’ are all associated with being modern, being of the younger generation, being educated and, in many cases, being influenced by the radio. It would seem, therefore, that radio is an intangible, but nevertheless important part of a mix of influences and trends associated with social and behaviour change among rural women.

## Chapter 6 – Radio Broadcasters in Eritrea

### 6.1. Radio Output

This chapter concentrates on research findings about broadcasters in Eritrea. Firstly, the output of radio will be described with an emphasis on programmes that are designed to be educational and developmental and aimed at women. Secondly, drawing on Maletzke's (1963) categories, findings are presented on the circumstances in which broadcasters produce that output (foregrounding their organizations and working conditions). Thirdly, observations are presented about their outlooks in relation to their own self-image, their views on radio, approach to education, and their image of the rural female audience.

#### 6.1.1. Overall radio output

As previously noted, radio in Eritrea is entirely under the control of the government. Two channels exist; the Mol's *Dimtsi Haffash* (DH), and the MoE's Educational Mass Media Programme (EMMP). The output of DH is a mix of music, news, information and education; the official programming balance being 40 percent education, 33 percent information and 27 percent entertainment (W.G., 1996). The EMMP is a much smaller outfit than DH, with only five producers and a handful of support staff. It only broadcasts for two hours per day, six days per week, on three adult education topics: Health, Agriculture and Civics. The timetables of each channel are designed so that same language broadcasts do not clash, although on Sundays, when both channels are on the air for longer, there is some overlap (see Appendix 1).

## 6.1.2. Educational output across both channels

### 6.1.2.i. Dimtsi Haffash (DH)

The educational output of DH is officially contained in seven weekly programmes entitled: 'Children', 'Mother and Child', 'Health', 'Agriculture', 'Questions and Answers', 'Us and Our Environment' and 'Youth'. There is some additional educational content in other programmes, as pointed out by the head of the Tigrinia section at DH:

**“Forty percent of *Dimtsi Haffash* is devoted to education. This is the policy of the Ministry [of Information], but of course entertainment can somehow be educational too. So the 27 percent [entertainment] includes music, dramas, jokes...These dramas and jokes are educational too, some jokes can make you laugh and convey a message as well” (W.G., 1996)**

The official educational programmes average about ten minutes each and are repeated at least twice during a week. The writer/producer for each programme normally prepares one or two new programmes every week. Most programmes will take one theme at a time – for example 'Chicken Pox' for the Health programme, or 'Literacy' for Mother and Child – although some, such as those for children's and youth, cover multiple topics within one show. Formats will vary depending on the theme, the time and the resources available to the producer. A drama format, for example, requires more time and effort than a straight talk, since it involves devising a plot and characters, writing out scripts and enlisting actors (K.M., 1996). Typically, about a quarter of educational programmes on DH are in drama format, while the majority is in dialogue format, straight talks or talks interspersed with actuality or music.

On the question of choice of subject, each individual producer is relatively free to choose the theme for his or her programmes. Producers are not, for instance, subject to an approved list of subjects from any higher authority. However, they are guided by seasonal calendars, such as those from the Ministry of Health (MoH). The following extract from an interview is illustrative:

“Researcher: How do you actually decide which subjects to cover?

S.B. (DH journalist): **I decide by the schedule of the Ministry of Health, they have a schedule of seasonal diseases. For example, this month is October and the next month is November. These months are cold and there is the common cold. Influenza, asthma, bronchial asthma appear, then our focus is on these diseases [and] how they can be prevented before the disease attacks.”**

For other programmes the producers rely on their own ‘feel’ for what is seasonally appropriate or on subjects currently in the news:

“ Researcher: How do you decide what agricultural subjects to cover?

G.A. (DH journalist): **Agriculture is very seasonal and I grew up in the countryside, and I know a lot about agriculture. My father was a farmer and I know everything about farming, and if I’m not sure, I ask the Ministry of Agriculture to give me an outline...At the moment there is a goat disease and I’ve already prepared the programme with sound effects. I talked with vets, and I am doing this programme in the form of a dialogue – a semi-drama.”**

The declared aim of DH is to make the tone and approach of its educative programmes as practically oriented and accessible to a non-literate, unschooled audience as possible. In the words of one of the producers:

**“ We use the language of the villagers most of the time because 80 percent of our audience are from the rural areas, that’s why we make it simple and short and [in] villagers’ language.”** (S.B., 1996)

The emphasis on practicality is to some extent reflected in the producers’ sources. For example, the health programme producers refer regularly to *Where There is No Doctor* (Werner, 1993), a highly practical health manual, which has been translated into both Tigrinia and Tigre. Otherwise, their main sources of technical advice are the relevant government ministries (health, agriculture, and so on).

### 6.1.2.ii. Educational output on EMMP channel

As one would expect, the adult education channel's output is designed to be a hundred percent educational. The official aims of the EMMP are as follows:

1. To teach the population about their own environment and how to make use of it.
2. To teach them – for their own civilisation and that of their country – about modern scientific technology and its use in development and the improvement of living standards.
3. To teach them gradually how to abandon harmful beliefs/traditions.
4. To introduce them to governmental organisations and NGOs in order to improve their living standards.
5. To reinforce the literacy campaign in order to eradicate illiteracy.
6. To improve and conserve their languages, culture, traditions and artistic heritage in order that they be passed on to future generations.
7. To encourage people to cooperate to be united and to be tolerant of each other' (Ministry of Education<sup>b</sup>, 1995).

Broadcasting in Tigrinia and Tigre on alternate days, the EMMP's output consists of three different programmes on Agriculture, Civics and Health, per language, per week. Thus, a typical week's output will be a programme about agriculture (e.g. poultry keeping); a programme about health (e.g. measles); and a programme about civics (e.g. the Constitution). Each programme is repeated four times during the week, or in the case of Tigre, six times; and is designed to fit a thirty minute slot and, typically will consist of three to six sections of talk interspersed with musical interludes. Variations are sometimes made by using two alternating speakers, or a poem recited at the end. Sometimes a pre-recorded interview with an expert, such as a doctor, may be included. On rare occasions a topic will be presented in drama format. For the Civics slot, for example, about one in five programmes are written in the form of a radio drama (K.H., 1996).

The half-hour format is designed to fit with the MoE's literacy programme. The principle is that adults (mainly women) attending literacy classes in their villages spend the last session of their class listening to the educational broadcasts and discussing the content with their teachers. But, in fact, the majority of listeners to the EMMP programmes do not listen in the context of literacy classes because the Listening Centres are not (yet) fully functional (as described in section 6.2.3.ii below). The majority of listeners to the EMMP are ordinary individuals listening on a casual, rather than an organised basis, just as they do to the main channel, *Dimtsi Haffash*.

### *Approach to Topics*

Within these three topics, the individual producers – of whom there is one for each topic – have decided on a yearly (52 week) cycle of programmes in consultation with their superiors in the MoE. Thus, for Health, a list has been drawn up which shows the sub-topic to be covered for each week of each month of the year. Thus, for the first week of January 1996 the health broadcast was 'Gender/Sex education/Promiscuity'; the topic for week two was 'Relationships and Their Consequences for Health'; for week three 'The White Blood Cells'; for week four 'Aids', and so on throughout the year. At the time of fieldwork the producers were planning to repeat this pattern every year. This means that, in theory, every year listeners can be sure of hearing the same cycle of programmes repeated once more.

The tone and approach of these adult education programmes is meant to be as practical as possible, while at the same time being educational in the sense of teaching new concepts and terminology. Thus, for example, a programme about malaria will include practical advice about avoiding and treating the disease, while at the same time explaining which mosquito transmits the disease and how (see malaria script in Appendix 5). The overall aim of the Health programmes is to 'build a healthy and productive person' (Ministry of Education<sup>b</sup>, 1995). All the health topics are based on national primary health care priorities, namely: sex education, mother and child care, immunization, communicable and non-communicable diseases, food health, hygiene and sanitation, home economics, first aid, family planning and common diseases (GoE, 1995). Likewise the agricultural subjects are meant to correspond to the agricultural reality of the audience, namely small-scale, low input,

subsistence production. The aim, according to the broadcasters, is to reflect this in the programmes. Typical agriculture programme topics include poultry keeping, soil erosion, reforestation, and livestock diseases. The Civics programmes are very different from the 'Politics' programmes that preceded them before liberation. Now, they are designed to reinforce the spirit of renewal in independent Eritrea and to help the population become good citizens (K.H., 1996). In Tigrinia the programmes are called *mahabarawi hiwot*, literally meaning 'life skills'. They cover:

- “- Developing our culture
- Improving work, loving work and encouraging work
- Widening and disseminating education
- Improving people's social and economic situation
- Children's upbringing
- Geography, history and general knowledge” (Ministry of Education<sup>b</sup>, 1995)

Some of the specific topics covered under Civics include: **“alcoholism, prostitution, labour and productivity, rearing children, traditional weddings and other traditional customs.”** (K.H., 1996).

### **6.1.3. Output aimed at women and girls across both channels**

Just as educational material is not necessarily and only contained in 'educational' programmes, material of interest to women is not only and necessarily contained in output designed for women. However, there is one programme especially meant for women's consumption: 'Mother and Child'. This is a ten to fifteen minute programme, produced twice a week on DH, and each repeated once. Timings are chosen to optimise target audience listening; in the early morning (7.30am) and repeated at midday on Mondays and Wednesdays. The timings are thought to correspond to the times when most women will be at home, preparing meals. Examples of the topics covered by 'Mother and Child' include women's credit schemes, the problems of single mothers, raising and disciplining children, family planning and the dangers of female circumcision and other traditional practices like

removing children's uvulas<sup>62</sup> (see script in Appendix 5). Sometimes topics treated in this programme will be chosen in response to listeners' letters or verbal requests.

In most cases only female presenters work on 'Mother and Child' – although a male producer may write it. Formats vary from straight talks, to talks interspersed with actuality and/or interviews. Some programmes are in the form of mini-dramas. Most include musical interludes thought to be appropriate to the broadcast language. The presenters try to use other devices such as sound effects to attract their listeners:

**“If the programme concerns them [women], they try to listen. For example I have a programme in which a child laughs and cries. When he does this, they feel concerned, they think that the programme is their's.”**  
(G.A., 1996)

Broadcasters working on the programme are confident of its appeal, as the head of the Tigrinia section says:

**“For a mother, the Mother and Child programme will be and should be the most special for her, and she does want to listen to it.”** (W.G., 1996)

**“Most women listen to the Mother and Child programmes...”** (G.A., 1996)

Apart from 'Mother and Child' no other programmes are designed to attract specifically women. However, the slots for 'Health' (on DH and EMMP), 'Questions and Answers' (DH) and 'Youth' (DH) all include subjects thought by broadcasters to be of interest to them. The objectives of the EMMP's health series explicitly states as its first priority:

**'to give attention to the needs of women, and children since they make up a large percentage of the total population, and since much of the burden of work in rural communities falls upon them.'** (Ministry of Education<sup>b</sup>, 1995)

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<sup>62</sup> Surgical removal of the uvula in children is a widespread traditional practice in Eritrea. It is believed to prevent an inflamed uvula, which is said to block the air passage in the pharynx and cause the individual to suffocate (Teklemichael, Legesse et.al. 1993).

Agricultural programmes too, are sometimes designed to attract women listeners, particularly when they deal with small stock such as poultry, and with the processing and storage of food.

Younger women and girls are thought to be catered for in youth and children's programmes. The latter programme (on DH Saturdays 7.30am and 12.40pm) are designed for both sexes between the ages of four and fifteen years of age:

**“It's both educational and entertaining, but it always has a message, to try to tell them how to be good boys and girls, how to follow your classes, study your homework, it covers morality, ethics and so on.”**

(W.G., 1996)

Similarly, the 'Civics' programmes (EMMP) often includes advice to and about children and adolescents, including issues of particular relevance to girls, such as the importance of education, the dangers of early marriage, prostitution and unwanted pregnancies.

Although they are not referred to as such by broadcasters, some of these subjects may be classed as gender issues, in that they pertain to women and girls' socially determined, as opposed to biological, roles. During fieldwork, the researcher noted radio programmes or parts of programmes on all of the following gender topics.

Mostly on DH, but some on EMMP:

- discouraging female circumcision;
- discouraging domestic violence and male alcohol abuse;
- encouraging support for widows and abandoned women;
- discouraging prostitution;
- encouraging family planning;
- discouraging early marriage;
- encouraging women's literacy, vocational training and girls' education;
- encouraging girls' participation in military service;
- encouraging greater involvement of men in child care;
- encouraging monogamous relationships;
- encouraging membership of the National Union of Eritrean Women (NUEW);

- encouraging women's uptake of credit schemes and income-generating projects;
- clarifying women's divorce rights.

Although the list looks long, some of these subjects will only have been covered once or twice.

## **6.2. Eritrean Broadcasters' Organisations and Working Teams**

Having briefly described radio output, this section looks at the circumstances under which broadcasters produce educational and developmental programmes.

### **6.2.1. Limited Resources**

The most prominent feature of Eritrean radio broadcasters' working conditions is their general lack of resources – human, financial and technical. This observation is made both on evidence provided by the broadcasters themselves and by comparing their facilities with national radio stations in other parts of Africa<sup>63</sup>.

For instance, many of the staff at both DH and EMMP complain of lack of time, largely because all programme producers must combine the roles of researcher, scriptwriter, presenter, actor and occasionally even technician. In the words of one broadcaster:

**“My main problem is that I have to prepare three programmes a week. This is a lot – too many. For ‘Mother and Child,’ I only write the scripts and other people act them...but for the agriculture programmes I write and act in the dramas. I assume the role of a farmer in the studio...I help the technicians...I number the cassettes [of actuality]..I tell the coordinators which music to choose...”** (G.A., 1996)

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<sup>63</sup> Having observed national broadcasting structures and facilities in a number of African countries (e.g. Uganda, Mali, Burkina Faso, Rwanda, Senegal, Kenya) from the mid-1990s onwards, the researcher cannot say that any are luxurious, but they are at least more adequate than those in Eritrea in 1995-96.

Inadequate budgets and limited availability of skilled manpower is an ongoing problem:

**“I wish DH were on air all day. [But] this would mean more qualified professional personnel, better equipped with transmitters and tape recorders. All our journalists are overloaded. Most of them work up to 9 or 10pm.”** (W.G., 1996)

Shortage of transport and lack of training opportunities are common complaints. Adequate technical equipment is also in short supply. The EMMP is particularly poorly resourced compared with DH:

“We have a shortage of equipment., and cannot do much on our own [eg. without the help of the larger DH station]. We only have one typewriter and we have a problem with writing scripts in Tigre [due to the shortage of translators on the staff]. We have a very small library, which is our main resource... We have only one audio tape library ...we need a better filing system. We have some tape-recorders for outdoor recordings, but we do not have a tape-recorder that can be listened to by more than one person. We have only one technician and only one librarian.” (Ministry of Education<sup>b</sup>, 1995)

Another problem which particularly affects the EMMP, as the staff see it, is a lack of source and reference material. For example, the main source book for the EMMP Tigre section – for all programmes - is a children’s encyclopedia published in the UK in the 1970’s.

“Radio depends on raw *‘tsuhuf* (written materials); if it doesn’t get them it is like installing a grinding machine and having the workers there, without any grain. There should be a responsible person in every ministry to liaise with the EMMP radio. Everything that has been prepared already is thanks to the creativity of the producers, from books and from journals, but the educational programmes in order to show the present condition of the country have to come from raw materials from the ministries. The responsibility to change

these written documents into radio scripts is the task of the producers.”  
(Ministry of Education<sup>b</sup>, 1995)

Apart from highlighting the problem of resources, the above quote shows how broadcasters in Eritrea perceive their raw material as being sourced from other governmental ministries in the capital, rather than, for example, from local structures in rural areas or from the listeners themselves.

Broadcasters labour under other practical constraints – although in most cases they are so used to them that they do not articulate them. These include non-existent archiving and library procedures, very poor stocks of consumables (for example audio tapes are repeatedly re-used), very limited telecommunication and computer facilities, and severe shortages of reference materials. Furthermore, work is hampered by lack of support staff (such as typists, researchers, messengers, and drivers) and the need constantly to translate between at least two different languages.

### **6.2.2. Centralised structure**

A salient characteristic of Eritrean radio is its centralised nature. Apart from using the Mol's small network of news correspondents<sup>64</sup> based in provincial towns, DH operates entirely from the capital, Asmara. As noted above, there are no regional radio stations, no non-governmental radios and none are planned for the foreseeable future. Likewise, the EMMP is based in the capital and has no regional stations or correspondents. However, it does have a small number of Listening Centres, which operate using the Ministry's school buildings at village level. When fully operational these Listening Centres may eventually form a decentralized network which could be a link between broadcasters and their scattered rural audience, but for the time being this is not the case.

All broadcasters find that they rarely have the opportunity to travel outside Asmara, either to research their programmes or to meet their audience. Part of the problem is related to limited resources, such that neither DH nor EMMP has any dedicated

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<sup>64</sup> These are a handful of journalists stationed in the main regional towns charged with gathering news.

vehicles for travel outside Asmara. Staff shortages mean that broadcasters have no one to substitute for them while they are away. If broadcasters do leave the capital, they must usually travel on public buses that are slow, infrequent and prone to breakdowns. Sometimes radio staff make *ad hoc* arrangements to get into rural areas with MoI or other Ministry's vehicles (G.A., 1996). But, on average the EMMP producers each make about two or three trips of up to 15 days out of the capital per year each (D.K., 1996), and the male presenters at DH reportedly do up to five trips (G.A., 1996). Travel for female presenters is further limited by family commitments and by social constraints. One of the women Tigre journalists at DH said:

**K.M.: I don't get out into the field very often...Maybe twice a year. Not more than that.**

Researcher: That means that you can't collect voices of people themselves, for example mothers talking about their children.

**KM: Yes, that is a great problem because I have to go outside of Asmara because most of my listeners are outside. I need permission first of all, then transport and materials, everything...I have to make the programmes that will be broadcast while I'm away and, besides, I have to find transportation. Anyway, I couldn't prepare, say 8 programmes [in advance]...I could go out for one night and come back [if we had our own vehicles], but I have to go by bus to Keren [a day's journey], but even there this is not my target audience, it's the surroundings of Keren, so even when I've got there I still need further transportation..."**

The implications of a highly centralised system such as this are numerous. Some of the problems that it creates are acknowledged by the broadcasters. For example, they know that it limits the possibilities of audience feedback (S.B., 1996), and it makes listener surveys or evaluations difficult (D.K., 1996). Elements which can enliven broadcasts such as sound effects from the field, *vox pop*, interviews with rural dwellers, and local music cannot be gathered easily. The presenters know that this detracts from the quality of their programmes.

### **6.2.3. Embryonic and Undeveloped Structures**

A further salient feature of Eritrean radio is its newness. This means that although much important planning has taken place since independence, broadcasters work in a context where much has yet to be implemented. At the time of fieldwork there were several projects in-train: including the building of new premises and studios, the upgrading of transmitting equipment, training and recruiting of new staff, and, for the EMMP radio, the development of Listening Centres. But since resources are scarce, development of the broadcasting sector is, and will remain, relatively slow.

### 6.2.3.i Training

The process of skills upgrading and development is ever-present in broadcasters' minds. They talk continually of future plans and of forthcoming expansion (D.K., 1996; G.A., 1996). They also acknowledge that their jobs are a steady learning experience:

**“ I want to produce very effective...programmes for my target audience and [so] I need some advanced...skills. I know I have a lot to learn in communication and evaluation skills...[but] I want to continue – I want to be a man of communication.”** (D.K., 1996)

The need for staff training is acknowledged by managers at ministry level to some extent. Consequently, ad hoc training arrangements – mainly with outside aid-funded bodies - are made on an occasional basis<sup>65</sup>. Overseas trainings are made available to some of the more senior producers, but they are normally short one-off courses and rarely satisfy the need for thorough professional training. Instead, they are seen by some staff as a 'pain killer' or as compensation for low salaries, long hours and poor terms and conditions of service (A.A., 2003).

Broadcasters at DH and EMMP feel that the following are training priorities: evaluation and survey methods; scriptwriting for drama; acting skills; English language skills; specialist subject orientation (e.g. on specific health topics); **'to become an expert in radio production'** (K.H. 1996); and **'to change peoples'**

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<sup>65</sup> The present research is partly based on participatory observation carried out by the researcher during two of such *ad hoc* courses. These were organised by myself and colleagues (both Eritrean and expatriate) and were funded mainly by the EU.

**customary beliefs'** (P.N., 1995). When opportunities arise for training - for example, if the MoH runs a special course on an aspect of public health – then the relevant radio staff are normally allowed to attend. One of the recommendations made by the MOE after the first year of operations by the EMMP was that: “Producers should be invited to more seminars to enhance their knowledge about problems of the day” (Ministry of Education<sup>b</sup>, 1995). However, releasing staff for training is not easy when human resources are short, and strategic planning by the GoE is difficult when training opportunities and funding are available only on an opportunistic basis.

#### 6.2.3.ii. Listening Centres

As previously noted, part of the planned structure of radio in Eritrea is a distance education element which is intended to work through a network of Listening Centres throughout the country. Like plans for training, Listening Centres are still being developed, although they are meant to be central to the overall design of the EMMP. Consequently, at the moment most listeners to the EMMP channel, in the country as a whole, are not, in effect, listening in organized centres but are tuning in on a casual basis.

When the EMMP began broadcasting in 1995, 50 pilot listening centres were planned. However, by the end of the first year of operations only twenty were actually functional, with 1000 female and 89 male attendees (Ministry of Education<sup>b</sup>, 1995). By 1996 the official number of centres stood at 86 (Haile, 1996). But the number of fully functioning centres is acknowledged by broadcasters to be much lower, though precise figures were not known by the relevant officials at the MoE at the time of the present study.

The idea behind the centres is to provide a physical forum in which adults - mainly women - listen to educational radio together and have the chance to question and discuss the issues raised in the programmes afterwards. In the words of the EMMP:

“Listening centres are for:  
Mothers who have no radios at home  
To allow people to sit and listen to the programmes until the end  
To allow them to discuss and argue about the programmes.” (Ministry of Education<sup>b</sup>, 1995)

They are linked with the MoE’s adult literacy programme in that they are meant to take place during weekly adult literacy classes. Because priority has been given to women’s literacy at the national level, the listening centres target mainly women (Ministry of Education<sup>b</sup>, 1995). The broadcasts are timed to coincide with the last hour of the weekly literacy classes, which are meant to take place between 4 and 6pm. Literacy/listening classes are normally held in the village school building and usually involve the local primary school teacher as radio ‘animator’. Animators are provided with subject guides on the educational radio programmes that his (they are usually men) class are due to listen to. Compiling and producing this animators’ guide is one of the jobs of the EMMP producers in Asmara. The animator’s task is to help stimulate discussion and to answer questions after the class has finished listening. His role is described in the words of one of the EMMP broadcasters:

**“The teacher [animator] is well informed about what is going to be broadcast at that time. So he makes the listeners ready and he monitors it. At the end of the radio broadcast he also raises issues about what the audience listened to and they debate – they discuss it. That is the advantage of the listening centres.”** (D.K., 1996)

However, the foregoing is a description of the way the listening centres are *meant* to work and are *meant* to dovetail with the adult literacy programme. Unfortunately, in practice, it is difficult to find many properly functioning listening centres in Eritrea’s rural areas. This is evidenced by the fact that the MoE was unable to name a single functioning centre in a Tigre-speaking area for the purposes of this research. Furthermore, observations showed that, for example, in Awlietseru (one of the larger case-study villages in the central Highlands), the listening classes had been abandoned after a year because of lack of teachers and premises. In another village, Hadish Agdi, the listening group was supposed to be run by a local teacher

who had to walk over ten miles to reach the village, which meant it rarely took place. In Kuandaba, another case-study village, several villagers had put their names down for literacy/listening classes but said they were waiting for the government to send a teacher. At the time of fieldwork, none of the country's ten regional education offices had transportation available for the adult education supervisors to visit rural centres (Ministry of Education<sup>b</sup>, 1995).

Many of the reasons for the EMMP's problems are linked to the overall lack of resources in the Eritrean education sector. Firstly, there are simply insufficient numbers of qualified teachers and literacy/listening animators available in the country as a whole (Ministry of Education<sup>a</sup>, 1995). Reconstructing a nation's educational structures after years of war and destruction is certainly an uphill struggle (UNICEF, 1994). Now, as the MoE acknowledges, all teachers must work in difficult conditions for relatively low salaries (Ministry of Education<sup>a</sup>, 1995). Originally there was no provision for paying teachers to run the extra radio sessions. However, this was revised in 1996 when it was decided to pay them a small incentive of 200 Birr per month (equivalent to about £20 sterling in 1996) (Haile, 1996). Moreover, under revised regulations for the 1995/96 academic year, primary teachers' hours were substantially increased in order to accommodate more children in school. This meant that many teachers and school buildings which had been free during the afternoons in 1995 were closed to adult literacy classes in 1996 onwards, because they started to be used by children all day. Unfortunately, the radio link-up with adult literacy classes was designed with the previous (1995) timetable in mind.

Secondly, a basic flaw is that the literacy classes tend to be organised in urban or semi-urban areas, whereas the adult education radio programmes are 'focussed on life in villages or semi-villages' (Ministry of Education<sup>b</sup>, 1995). The EMMP is therefore designed with a different audience in mind to that which it is reaching in the literacy centres. Thirdly, there is a lack of child-care facilities at the centres. Women must bring their young children with them and therefore noise and overcrowding can be a problem:

“...in some places more than 70 adults (women) were crowded into one class with one radio, one animator and all this was disturbed by the chatter of children” (Ministry of Education<sup>b</sup>, 1995).

Another problem with the Listening Centres is the heavy burden placed on the radio animator. The EMMP acknowledges that: 'In some places the animator is weak and insufficiently dynamic' (Ministry of Education<sup>b</sup>, 1995). In theory his role is to stimulate discussion and answer questions posed by listeners after the broadcasts. But in practice those who are recruited are not equipped to fulfill the demands of the job. They have had no special training, being mostly primary school teachers or just ordinary school leavers with no work experience. Furthermore, they have only the most basic of background material provided by the EMMP in booklet form; yet they are expected to provide information and answer listeners' questions on a wide range of subjects encompassing all aspects of agriculture, health and civics. Given these circumstances it is difficult for the animators to satisfy the information needs of their audience.

With a lack of basic equipment, including lack of batteries for the radios on some occasions, and the dilapidated condition of many school buildings, as well the difficulty of attracting rural people with heavy domestic and agricultural workloads, it is perhaps no wonder that both the literacy and the Listening Centres register low overall attendance and high dropout rates (see Chapter 3), and are not as successful as officials would hope.

#### **6.2.4. Coordination Issues**

There is little coordination between the two channels, since DH and EMMP fall under two different ministries. But, on the question of the possibility of overlap or contradiction between the two channels, the head of the Tigrinia section at DH was relaxed:

**'Well, so far we haven't sat down and discussed what we [DH] should do, and what they [EMMP] should do. They broadcast the same programmes as us, but it's not a problem if you broadcast it repeatedly, whether by the Ministry of Information or the Ministry of Education.'**  
(W.G. 1996)

It would seem that it is acceptable for the same subject to be treated by both channels because staff trust that there is no divergence between the two ministries' views on any subject.

However, opportunities for effective campaigns are often missed because of lack of overall coordination or inter-ministerial dialogue. For example, during the period of the present field work, UNICEF attempted to convene an inter-ministerial IEC (Information, Education and Communication) working group on health topics such as immunization and hygiene. However, attendance by broadcasters from DH and EMMP was erratic because of other work commitments (as already noted, their work schedules are very heavy) and the group failed to fulfill a coordinating role. Another example arose during a radio campaign about enclosures of forested grazing land (see Myers, Adam, & Lalanne, 1995). In 1995, DH and EMMP journalists cooperated with officials at the Ministry of Agriculture (MoA), on a series of short, dramatized radio spots. These focused on a recent change in the national forestry laws which allowed villagers to enter enclosures (protected land) to gather grass and dead wood, provided they continued to ensure that livestock was excluded from them. Unfortunately, lower-level MoA officials had not all been instructed to allow this practice on the ground, so, despite what the radio spots said, villagers were still prevented from entering the enclosures, and were even fined if they did so. This was a classic example of lack of intra- and inter-ministerial cooperation, and clearly undermined the authority of the radio broadcasts. It illustrates how careful coordination is needed between radio-messages and on-the-ground extension if developmental radio messages are to have an impact.

### **6.3. Broadcasters' Outlook**

The previous section described the circumstances under which Eritrean broadcasters work; this section looks at how broadcasters see themselves: their general outlook and their attitudes towards the medium, towards education and towards the rural female audience.

### **6.3.1. Self-image**

Despite acknowledging that they do not visit the rural areas and talk to their listeners enough, all the broadcasters interviewed for this study nevertheless seemed confident that they are meeting their listeners' needs and interests. This self-assured approach appears to be based on two things; firstly on some degree of feedback from listeners and secondly on their own ideological convictions. Let us examine these two factors in turn.

#### **6.3.1.i. Feedback**

There have been no systematic listener surveys by DH. But there have been two limited ones undertaken by MoE staff. One was a short study of EMMP listening among 87 respondents (50 women and 37 men) in ten semi-rural villages around Asmara, which found a high proportion of radio-ownership (82.75% of households) and a good following for the EMMP channel (just over 90% of respondents listening at least once a week) (Office of the Schools in Asmara Province, 1996). However, this survey was not representative of the rural population, since it was done in the environs of the capital. The other survey also looked at responses to the EMMP, and covered 198 respondents in all provinces of the country, comprising 130 from the 'main target audience, such as mothers, peasants, workers and soldiers' and 68 'educated people'; the survey was not disaggregated by gender and does not appear to have been a random sample. The qualitative responses seem all to have been positive with over 85% saying that 'all the programmes they heard were related to their daily life.' The only criticism emerging from this survey was from some of the 'educated' respondents who said: 'The word 'Civics' is not clear for us, so how do you expect it to be clear for the peasants?' (1995:5) and 'using external [foreign] terminology is very difficult for the peasants, we advise you to change to understandable local terminology' (1995:5).

Apart from these studies, which cannot be said to be independent, since they were done by government employees, the majority of listener feedback received by staff at both DH and EMMP is of an anecdotal nature. It comes in the form of letters and word of mouth.

Typically, broadcasters quote remarks from friends or relatives, or chance encounters with rural listeners. This constitutes their evidence that their programmes are being positively received:

“Researcher (MM): Do you think rural women are benefiting from your programmes?

G.A. (DH broadcaster): **Yes, they benefit especially from [programmes about] diseases, diarrhoea, breast-feeding, I assume they benefit from that.**

MM: *You assume?*

GA: **Well, my friends from around the country encourage me and say ‘go ahead, continue’. Those who live in Mendefera, Gash-Setit and so on. But we haven’t done an official questionnaire. This is [just] my assumption.”**

“MM: Who do you think is the main audience for your health programmes?

S.B. (DH broadcaster): **Well it is not definite, but we get an idea by imagination. There has been no survey so far...but participants give us envelopes [eg. letters] saying ‘Continue, your programme is good, it’s educational.”**

When the broadcasters at DH and EMMP were asked about the content and quantity of listeners’ letters, it became clear that they receive very few – perhaps two or three - per week (K.M., 1996) and most are sent by men. This is not surprising considering the high rates of illiteracy, particularly among rural women. The letters and remarks broadcasters receive are, apparently, almost all positive. To convey a sense of why broadcasters feel they are having a positive impact on listeners, it is worth quoting the following extract from an interview with KM, one of the DH broadcasters:

“MM: Do you get encouragement from letters?

“KM: **Yes, it gives me satisfaction because I can understand that people are listening to my programmes and that is one kind of feedback.**

**MM: Do they ever make suggestions or ask to change this or that, or say this or that isn’t good?**

KM: **No, they say the programmes are good and ‘I want to ask a question’.**

MM: So they never criticize?

KM: **No, I’ve never got such a letter.**

MM: That’s good. How many letters do you get per week roughly?

KM: **Maybe two or three.**

MM: Now, do you think that rural women are benefiting from your programmes?

KM: **Yes, even though there is no survey of what changes have happened I think they are benefiting. Because...one of our [staff] members went to Agordat and he told me that his child caught chicken pox . The week before that I broadcast that there was no vaccine for chicken pox, so the way you treat it is to deal with the secondary infections and keep on giving food. So his wife heard the programme, and then when he asked her to take the child to hospital, she told him that it is said [on the radio] that there was no treatment for it except in the home. So he told me ‘my wife said such and such’.**

MM: Right she learned something from the radio that was useful?

KM: **Yes, she learnt something.”**

Such anecdotal evidence gives broadcasters a sense of the value of their work.

#### 6.3.1.ii Ideological Convictions

Strong self-belief among broadcasters is also due to a firm sense of shared ideology. This ideology stems from the independence war and the fact that the majority of broadcasters, particularly those working at DH, are former fighters. This means their broadcasting careers began literally on the battle-field. Some have seen action, and most, if not all, have lost family and friends in the struggle. Most fighters, and most broadcasters, have experienced the hardships of living in the remotest parts of the country and have some first-hand experience of peasant life.

Now that Eritrea is liberated, they share a sense of pride about the struggle they went through to achieve independence. Linked to that sense of pride in victory, is a sense

of moral responsibility to 'defend the gains of the revolution', by promoting popular education through radio.

The following is an extract from an interview with the head of the Tigrinia section of DH, W.G., which illustrates her sense of connectedness with her audience, as a result of being a fighter:

**“W.G.: We get feedback, especially from the ‘Mother and Child’ and ‘Health’ programmes...We receive [mothers’] reactions in different ways. They say ‘Oh, our children, they are trying to educate us, they’re very good formats, please try to keep it. If it’s ‘talk talk talk’ we can’t understand it, but this is very simple and understandable’ . [We get this feedback] through letters and just through chatting with them.”**

MM: So when they write letters, they [the listeners] address you as their daughter?

**WG: Yes, this is because we have a very cohesive society, especially they have a special appreciation for the fighters. But generally this is our culture.”**

Even those broadcasters who were not fighters - for example some of the staff at the EMMP station - seem to possess an unwavering sense of duty to help reconstruct the country, and claim a sense of closeness to the people that reflects certain element of the original Marxist ideology of the EPLF. Furthermore, most, if not all, broadcasters have familial links with the countryside, such that they believe they know from first hand experience what life is like there. Coupled with a sense of closeness to the rural people is a clear belief in their right, as broadcasters, to define their audience's best interests. For example, one of the DH producers said what most preoccupied him was 'how we can make better programmes to stop people having incorrect beliefs' (P.N., 1995). The wording of some official documents conveys this sense too. For example, the second and third points of the aims of the EMMP (as previously quoted) could be said to have a distinctly paternalistic ring:

- '2. To teach them [the population] – for their own civilization and that of the country – about modern scientific technology and its use in development...
3. To teach them gradually how to abandon harmful beliefs/traditions.'

and further:

‘The target audience are mothers, peasant, workers and soldiers... It is believed that adults are the ones who need these programmes...’ (Ministry of Education<sup>b</sup>, 1995).

The broadcasters themselves express this sentiment in interviews:

**‘This audience are mostly not literate, most of them don’t know how to read and write so we think that to help this majority will be an advantage for them and also for the reconstruction of the country.’** (D.K., 1996)

**‘[Our programmes] are for consciousness, for changing habits and traditional practices...our listeners are supposed to listen to our radio programmes... in a serious kind of way.’** (K.H., 1996)

And the general approach is evident in official documents, such as the following extract from an internal evaluation of the EMMP:

‘When we talk about development, it means the introduction of new innovations...This new thinking is... injected into the people by way of various communication mechanisms...’ (Office of Schools in Asmara Province, 1996)

### **6.3.2. Awareness of the power and potential of radio**

Eritrean broadcasters seem to have an idealised sense of the power of radio, which may stem from radio’s significant role in the liberation struggle. Its role in boosting both military and civilian morale, its power in psychological operations against the enemy and its educational role (see Chapter 3), are all fresh in broadcasters’ memories.

**“[Because it] started in the armed struggle the people really believed it, even [now] you can’t convince them and tell them that DH is lying. We should maintain this credibility.” (W.G., 1996)**

Futhermore, broadcasters perceive radio as reaching almost everybody in the country:

**‘Ninety five percent of the population depend on DH...they listen very attentively.’ (W.G., 1996).**

Despite this powerful image of their medium, broadcasters are still aware that they must attract their listeners and keep them. The EMMP, because it is a relatively new channel, is especially aware of the need to bring in listeners. In its report on its first operating year it identified the use of *drama* as particularly important:

‘The producers’ main aim was to attract the audience. In order to do this they used different formats such as drama. Drama is one of the most well-liked formats but it demands a lot of work.’ (Ministry of Education<sup>b</sup>, 1995)

Producers at DH also confirm the popularity of drama:

**‘I worked on programmes on hygiene and...menstruation in drama [format] before liberation, and after liberation women were laughing and saying ‘you said like this and this...’ They remembered that programme. So what I think from this is that dramas are very effective and people still remember those hygiene programmms.’ (K.M., 1996)**

Due to limited resources producers are not able to broadcast as many dramas as they would like, and find it difficult to weave educational messages into plays. Sometimes either the dramatic impact suffers from an overly heavy-handed insertion of an educational message, or the educational point is lost in the drama of the story. Producers themselves acknowledge that they need more experience and training in the use of drama. Nevertheless, this has not diminished their faith in how effective radio theatre can be in attracting an audience and conveying a memorable message.

### **6.3.3. Approaches to Education**

A striking aspect of broadcasters' general outlook is the importance they attach to education. It is significant that on DH, a 40 percent slice of the schedule is devoted to education and that the only other radio transmitter in the country is used by the MoE, and, so far no music-oriented radio channels are allowed. Both these policy decisions reflect the self-help and self-improvement philosophy of the EPLF. But despite there being a national consensus that education is a 'good', educational/educative<sup>66</sup> broadcasting is being approached in quite a variety of ways, and there are some inconsistencies and contradictions in its implementation. This results in some interesting disparities between ideals and reality, outlined as follows.

#### 6.3.3.i. EMMP

Taking the EMMP first, broadcasters here perceive a strong link between radio education and literacy, as evidenced by the explicit connection between the broadcasts and literacy classes. The EMMP is part of the Eritrean MoE's 'basic needs' agenda in terms of adult education: adult literacy as a first priority, coupled with practical topics such as those offered on the radio, namely agriculture, health and civics. Given this link with literacy at the point of consumption, one might expect radio broadcasts to make an explicit link with literacy. This is happening to some extent, (for example, one of the Civics programmes is a drama about an old woman who decides to enroll for literacy classes), but opportunities to encourage reading or to feature characters or storylines from the written literacy materials are not taken on a regular or consistent basis. Moreover, the animators' guides are meant to include the whole text of each radio broadcast plus background information so that, in theory, the animator can base a literacy class on the vocabulary used in the radio broadcast, but no copies of the radio scripts are made available to listeners, so they cannot read the text of the broadcast and listen at the same time. Programmes are not designed, as one might expect, to inspire listeners with the urge to read. Policy documents mention the possibility, in future, of doing more actually to promote literacy over the radio (Ministry of Education<sup>a</sup>, 1995), but this is not being implemented uniformly at

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<sup>66</sup> In the Literature Review (Chapter 2) the distinction between content which is educational and that which is educative is drawn out.

present. Rather, the link with literacy classes can be discerned less in the contents of the radio broadcasts and more in their format: the result is an emphasis less on 'literacy' and more on 'class'. Consequently, the programmes come across almost as class-room lectures. The EMMP broadcasters envisage their audience not as casual listeners - who the majority in fact are - but as students organised to listen in a classroom:

**“The structure of our radio station [is that] we have these listening centres. Adults are supposed to listen to our radio programmes regularly and they are meant to follow them and they have to come to the class and sit there and listen to our radio programmes...in a serious kind of way...”** (K.H., 1996)

Another tension inherent in the EMMP's outlook on education is their need to give practical advice on the one hand and their desire to upgrade listeners' knowledge on the other. For example, on health topics, the producers want to tell people how to avoid disease but they also want to teach them about the deeper causes of it. They are therefore forced to use terms such as 'bacteria,' 'red blood cells' or 'vitamins.' This inevitably presents them with problems, as they know that the majority of their audience have little or no schooling and will have difficulty in understanding such terms. The broadcasters are aware that they must find ways around the use of technical terms and they sometimes use approximations, such as using the word 'spices' instead of 'hormones' (see script in Appendix 5, 'Changes in Adolescence'). But the task they have given themselves remains problematic, namely that of helping listeners towards a new understanding of a topic, whilst having to convey it in a vocabulary they often do not understand.

#### 6.3.3.ii. Dimtsi Haffash

By contrast with the EMMP, the broadcasters at DH can be said to have a more relaxed view of education. It is more all-encompassing (cf. above, W.G.'s remark that jokes can be educational as well as funny), and is not premised on listeners being in a classroom setting. Staff of DH also seem to have a better developed sense of the style most appropriate for their rural audience: **'we make it simple and short and [in] villagers' language'** (S.B., 1996).

However, one negative consequence of this, is that educative/educational broadcasting is approached in an *ad hoc* way, depending largely on the inclinations and circumstances of DH's individual producers, and subject to very little overall quality-control. Most of the staff at DH would describe themselves as journalists, yet they do little news-gathering in the conventional sense. Their main work can best be described as compiling features, most of which have some educative content as well as being of general interest. The onus is on each individual producer to gather material and to ensure their facts are right. This can sometimes be difficult, given the shortage of reference materials available to them, their limited mobility and their own relatively low levels of professional training.

Interestingly, what matters to the head of the Tigrinia service in DH is the 'hammering' home of messages, which is revealing about the kind of style she feels is most appropriate for educative radio: (**' I believe you should hammer the messages and information.'**) (W.G., 1996). But, in spite of this, DH is not organized in such a way as to systematically repeat educational programmes or to treat the same topic in different formats on a planned or consistent basis. One reason is a lack of resources and of a coherent archiving system, such that many programmes are aired once and then the audio cassettes are taped over and used again for new programmes. Several producers feel they had produced successful programmes on educative or developmental topics in the past, but are frustrated that they had since been lost (e.g. K.M. 1996). Another reason is that topics are chosen opportunistically by individual producers, because they are able to get transport to a particular location, or because they happen to have attended a function or a training session given by another ministry; thus the result is a relatively random ordering of topics within the education slots.

Although DH broadcasters are evidently conscientious about trying to check their facts, lack of technical expertise and lack of access to expert views or research results means that few educative/developmental subjects can be treated in-depth. Accuracy is obviously of importance for such topics as health, agriculture, and so on, but there is no mechanism for accessing or checking technical information apart from the individual broadcaster going in person to ask for advice, as and when needed:

**'We have a lot of problems...one is we have no source material for broadcasts, except *Where There is No Doctor*. [So] I go on foot to ask people, saying 'Please will you help me, I need to prepare such and such a programme' to people like doctors and health professionals, so many times....If we were skilled we could produce more [but] we need help from other organisations for source materials about [for example] ORS and diarrhoea [which] we can translate... and then transmit ... in our language.'** (S.B., 1996)

For languages other than Tigrinia, the problem of gathering facts and of interviewing experts, and then interpreting facts on behalf of the audience, is even more difficult. K.M. describes the dominance of Tigrinia, the scarcity of Tigre-speaking specialists or advisers, and the added difficulty of translation for the Tigre-speaking audience:

**'The Tigrinia producers can get material. Most of the doctors, the teachers, educated people, etcetera, are Tigrinia and they participate. But ...I don't have many participants who can give me materials...In the health programmes I mainly write my own because Tigrinia producers can get many ready-made things [ie. fact-sheets, articles, guidelines] and according to my thinking their listeners can understand more complicated things, because most of the towns are in the Highlands and there is better education and better standard of life [there], so they can interpret medical language [better than Lowland Tigre speakers], so I always depend on myself...'** (K.M., 1996)

As well as a lack of systematised advice and quality-control on content, these testimonies reveal a preference for ready-made 'source materials' which will allow producers simply to translate or slightly adapt ministries' own guidelines and reports into radio scripts. This obviously has implications for programme quality, since the original source materials are not produced with an aural audience in mind, nor are they necessarily aimed at un-schooled rural people. Hence, the resulting radio programmes are often too long, too full of information, and are overly technical, as the sample scripts demonstrate (see Appendix 5).

#### 6.3.4. Image of the female audience

When asked who exactly their listeners are, broadcasters from both DH and EMMP say 'everyone'. However, when asked more closely about the likely gender balance of their audience, they acknowledge that men outnumber women because women have time and access problems:

**'[Women's] first problem is time. They're overloaded in the house. Secondly owning a radio and batteries, in fact owning a radio might be easier than getting batteries regularly. A third problem might be awareness, some women are not aware of these educational programmes.'** (W.G., 1996)

In the same vein, K.M. says:

**'For women in rural areas...radios are in the hands of man, so if the man is away from home, the woman cannot listen to the radio...because he carries it with him.. Secondly – even I experienced this problem – when the radio is on, you are busy with children then you only get a cut message. Concentration is a problem, they can't concentrate even when the radio is on and they are listening, but when you ask them what it says, they say, 'I don't know'.'**" (K.M., 1996)

When asked how they might be able to address this concentration and access problem, a number of broadcasters had some ideas. For example, KM thought **'more attractive music and attractive reading voice'** and **'summarising the message in one or two sentences at the end of the programme'** would help women retain more information. Most of the broadcasters acknowledged that drama and dialogues help overcome concentration problems. W.G. suggested subsidies on radio sets to improve access and **'maybe also telling men to save their beer money and to buy a radio'**. However, despite women being an explicit priority in terms of target audience, the fact that rural women listeners have special access problems and particular barriers to concentration was never *spontaneously* raised by

any of the broadcasters interviewed. It did not seem to concern or preoccupy them; it was more an unfortunate fact of life, not a problem that merited special attention.

A slightly protective tone is evident on women's issues and is used by men and women broadcasters alike. This tone is exemplified in scripts and remarks by broadcasters:

“Researcher - Do you think that rural women are benefiting from your programmes?

**SB - Of course they are beneficial because they help them to prepare food from their small plot of land, like beans, like green plants, and other things for their children. With a small amount of money they can get a good content of food, we teach this kind of thing...and the other thing is that they are illiterate, especially in the rural areas...our mothers are not intellectuals, that's why the programmes are beneficial.”** (S.B., 1996)

Not only do broadcasters have the self-confidence to define the best interests of rural women but they also, on many occasions, implicitly define the moral and social values of their audience: for example, W.G. says: **“If I'm talking about a good woman because she's hardworking and goes to school, I bring her voice in...”**. Here, the broadcaster is not just implicitly praising women's hard-work and [adult literacy] school attendance, she is also playing a role in determining moral standards.

In terms of subject matter, the only programme produced especially for women is called, significantly, 'Mother and Child' and, as the name implies, it emphasises the reproductive and domestic side of women's lives, not (often) strategic gender issues. On the question of the way such strategic issues might be handled, the following extract from an interview with EMMP broadcaster, K.H. shows how broadcasters feel it unwise to approach sensitive gender issues head-on:

‘MM - What about the more sensitive topics related to women' lives? For example the question of wife-beating. I know that domestic violence is quite common – it's common in all societies anyway – and the questions of female circumcision and family planning. Do you approach these subjects and how?’

**KH - Well, I cannot say that I have approached these subjects directly, but I can say I have prepared programmes concerning these subjects, concerning traditional cultural practices but not directly about beating women and female circumcision – but *around* these topics.’ (K.H., 1996)**

It must be mentioned that the DH channel has tackled such subjects more directly than EMMP and has run the occasional feature on the dangers of female circumcision (see script on harmful traditional practices in Appendix 5). But, the approach has been less of a campaign and more of a gradualist approach to change, as evidenced by the words of D.S., a NUEW representative who can be said to reflect the contemporary governmental line to which broadcasters subscribe:

“MM – Do you think that the radio is helping or could do more to help eradicate female circumcision? Are there radio programmes about it?

**DS - Yes, it’s been on the radio....to just spread the subject and bring discussion, but they don’t have such programmes [ie. campaigns], I think they [eg. broadcasters] have the same approach as us about it.**

MM - You mean the radio is not approaching the subject head-on?

**DS – They are not campaigning, but they are going slowly-slowly” (D.S., 1996).**

In sum, the image of the rural female audience, as reflected in broadcasters’ comments, seems to be both one of respect for their ‘mothers’ and one of paternalism. Rural women appear to them as a group of people living in harsh and unmodernised circumstances, who find it difficult to access radio, but who need it in order to be gradually guided away from traditional ideas and practices, towards ideals such as hard-work, better nutrition and educational achievement.

## **Chapter 7: Understanding Rural Women Listeners**

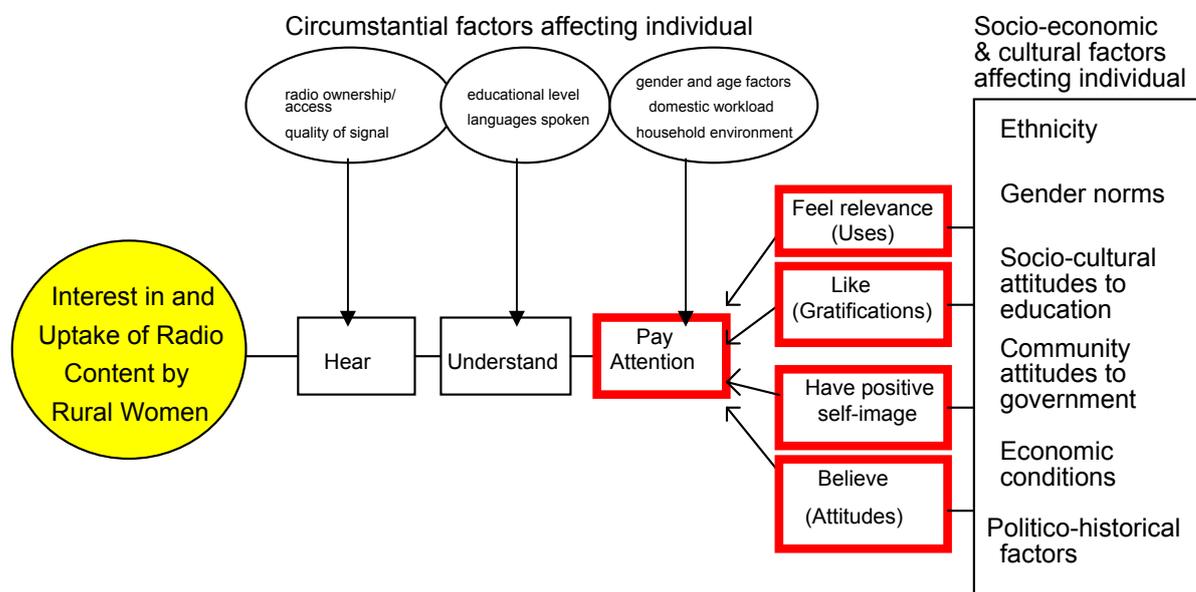
### **7.1. Introduction**

This chapter analyses and discusses the findings from Chapter 5 about women listeners. A model is constructed which helps to understand the way Eritrean rural women are approaching educational and developmental radio. The discussion here informs the next chapter, which takes the broadcasters' side of the Maletzke (1963) model and draws some conclusions from both this and the next chapter's discussions.

### **7.2. A model for understanding women and radio**

A model for analysing the determinants of interest and uptake of radio programmes by rural women is presented below (Fig. 3). It is constructed on the basis of the findings in Eritrea, but it is proposed that it could have application in other African countries and other circumstances. It is a development of the right hand/'receiver' side of the Maletzke (1963) model; it looks both at the receiver as an individual, and as a member of the audience/social group, indirectly and sub-consciously influenced as such. This adapted model goes into more detail than the original and can be regarded as a magnification of the right-hand side of the Maletzke (1963) model.

**Fig. 3: Determinants of Interest in and Uptake of Radio content by Rural Women in Eritrea**



### 7.2.1. Overview of the model

The circle on the left represents the desired goal: interest in and uptake of radio content by rural women listeners. Eliciting or provoking interest also implies sustaining it. 'Radio content' means educational and developmental radio programmes. Starting at the goal on the left and working backwards from it, the model proceeds through the three basic prerequisites for listening to radio by an individual woman, to the four important conditions that have to be fulfilled in order for interest to be elicited and uptake to ensue ('feel relevance', 'like', 'have positive self-image' and 'believe'). The top circles and the far right box are circumstantial and socio-economic background factors variously affecting these conditions.

### **7.2.2. Immediate prerequisites for radio listening**

The first three boxes to the right of the circle ('Hear', 'Understand' and 'Pay Attention') represent the immediate prerequisites for an individual rural woman to take an interest in educational and developmental content on the radio.

The three circles above these boxes, which feed down into each one, are the circumstantial background factors affecting 'hearing', 'understanding' and 'paying attention'. Thus, whether an individual woman can hear a radio set will normally depend on whether there is one in her household, or perhaps whether she lives near a listening centre or some other forum for communal listening; whether batteries or mains electricity are/is affordable and available; and whether or not she lives in an area of the country which receives a reasonable signal. Next, whether an individual woman can understand the radio will depend on: firstly whether her mother tongue or a language she knows well is catered-for, and secondly whether the register, style and accent used by the speaker is easy for her to comprehend; this can be related to what level of education she happens to have, and/or what degree of mobility, or how much travelling she has done, in order to perhaps have acquired other languages or dialects.

Third from the left are the main circumstantial factors which affect whether or not an individual woman can, or feels able to, pay attention to the radio. By 'household environment' is meant factors such as the presence of older sons or a husband who monopolise the radio or who may even forbid listening; or whether she has many noisy children; or whether she is head of household or is often alone at home and therefore uses the radio to keep herself company. The size and nature of an individual's 'domestic workload' also directly affect how much she can listen attentively. As discussed below, housework is the biggest single reason women give for not being able to listen to the radio. The age factor is also discussed below: for various social and cultural reasons older women tend to listen to the radio less than younger ones.

### **7.2.3. Four important conditions**

The four boxes towards the right ('feel relevance', 'like', 'have positive self-image' and 'believe') represent the four important conditions which, it is proposed, *all* need

to pertain if a rural Eritrean woman is to be interested in, learn from and adopt advice from the radio. To briefly explain from the top down: an individual has to feel that radio content has *relevance* to her life, she can use the information, and/or that it is available and affordable; she must *like* the way the content is presented and derive some kind of gratification or pleasure from it, in order to give and maintain her attention; she must also have a sufficiently *positive self-image* and confidence in her own abilities to understand radio-content, feel able to manipulate the radio set<sup>67</sup>, and feel that she is the sort-of-person for whom the radio has meaning; and finally she must have a positive image of the radio station and presenter(s) in order to trust and *believe* (at least some of) its content.

#### **7.2.4. Background socio-economic and cultural factors**

The box on the far right represents the background socio-economic and cultural factors that all influence or have a bearing on the four boxes to its left. These factors were not articulated by respondents, but are based on observations and analysis of what was seen and observed; and also on secondary researches regarding the history, politics and socio-economic realities of contemporary Eritrea. It assumes that the individual is a product and a reflection of his/her social milieu and politico-economic circumstances.

For example, in a country like Eritrea where radio is a government monopoly, a community's attitudes towards government will clearly affect a listener's individual tastes and trust in radio content. This is linked with ethnicity too. For instance there is some evidence to suggest that Tigre-speaking, lowland, Muslim people have less trust in *Dimtsi Haffash* than Tigrinia-speaking highland Christians (see Context chapter), for reasons related to the predominance of the Tigrinia ethnic group in the EPLF, and the EPLF being closely associated with *Dimsti Haffash*. Therefore, an individual woman from one ethnic group might be more, or less, predisposed to respond favourably to radio than an individual from another group. However, other influences, such as economic fortunes, and other politico/historical factors such as involvement or non-involvement in the war might either reinforce or override those

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<sup>67</sup> Khan 1996, COL 2000 and others have pointed out the difficulties experienced by learners – especially women - in using and manipulating new technologies such as the Internet, but less attention has been given to the fact that it requires a certain level of skill to operate a radio set.

responses. For example, in a Tigre village which benefited from the EPLF's administration in the liberated areas during the independence war, attitudes towards *Dimtsi Haffash* might well remain very positive, and override any feelings that the station may be the preserve of the Tigrinia.

The rest of this section selects the most interesting elements of the model for elaboration. Each of the 20 factors in the model will not be accorded equal weight in terms of explanation. Some elements of the model require little discussion; for example, it is self-evident that interest in radio is more likely where people have access to working radio-sets and good signal-reception; likewise, that the more languages a radio-listener speaks and understands, the more hours of speech radio she can, in theory, benefit from. Women and girls tend to have less knowledge of languages other than their mother tongue than men and boys (for reasons of less schooling and mobility) therefore women from minority groups are doubly disadvantaged in terms of radio listening. Some variables in the household environment such as the presence or absence of children to help with the domestic chores, or of older males who may monopolize the radio-set, will also obviously affect how much an individual woman can listen.

However, several factors in the model, such as those governing tastes and information needs, and those determining attention given to, and trust of the radio, are much more subtle, and require more space. The discussion is divided into five sections, as per the five boxes highlighted in the model (Fig.3): attention, uses and gratifications, self-image and attitudinal issues.

### **7.3. Attention issues**

#### **7.3.1. Attention to radio within the household – the influence of gender norms**

It is clear from the field research that gender relations within the household influence rural Eritrean women's access to and control over the radio set. The findings show that although few women are actually forbidden by their husbands to touch the household set, males dominate access to the radio and their control is tangible.

Morley's work (1986) on the way television is 'watched' by different members of the household - among working class families in London - is interesting as a comparison to Eritrea. He shows how television is an instrument of patriarchal power in the household and that the one 'structural principle' that operates across all the families, studied is gender. For instance, the final decision on which channel to watch is invariably taken by the father, or, if absent, by the son; remote controls are firmly in male hands. Morley analyses this pattern in terms of the home being the site of *leisure* for men, whereas it is women's sphere of *work*; thus men are better placed to watch television 'wholeheartedly', while 'women seem only to be able to do [it] distractedly and guiltily, because of their continuing sense of their domestic responsibilities' (Morley, 1986).

There is a striking similarity with rural Eritrea and radio, where the gender differences are even more stark. Men invariably regard the radio set as theirs to pick up and take where they like. When women do get a chance to tune in – typically during the day when men are working outside the homestead – their attention to the radio is fragmented due to their domestic workloads. Consequently, men are regarded as being able to concentrate better on radio programmes: **'For us [women], when we listen there are a lot of worries, and we are exhausted. Our attention is divided. But for men, they come home and their work's over, so they can concentrate and grasp better than us'** (as quoted in Chapter 5).

With these patterns in mind, it is interesting to compare female-headed households (of which there is a high proportion in Eritrea, due to the war), with the 'normal' male-headed ones. In the sample, though it was a small one, it emerged that women heads of households had more control over the household set, and were perhaps more reliant on it than those with spouses present<sup>68</sup>.

These observations regarding reception and behaviour help in understanding how the rural female audience can be better reached with educational and developmental radio programmes. If, as seems to be the case, the radio set is normally monopolised by men whilst in the household, then there is a case for women-only

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<sup>68</sup> There is, of course, the consideration that women-heads-of-households have heavier workloads than women in male-headed-households, so one might expect even more fragmented listening. Unfortunately, the sample size was not large enough to draw any firm conclusions, but a suggestion for further research into female-headed-households and radio is proposed in Chapter 9.

listening centres or groups, as privileged spaces, separate from the everyday. Moreover, if women are forced to listen in a fragmented way, there is a case for tailoring programme formats to suit their style of listening.

Soap operas were originally designed precisely so that listeners/viewers could drop in and out of them and pick up the plot without missing anything significant. They were, of course, designed originally with the busy Western housewife in mind, during the 1930's (Ang, 1985; Geraghty, 1991). But the appropriation of the soap opera genre for the purposes of development and social change has an almost equally long history, from the 1950s and *The Archers* onwards (see Fraser & Restrepo-Estrada, 1998). Long-running dramas are becoming increasingly popular as vehicles for 'edu-tainment' in developing countries, as noted in Chapter 2, and there is certainly a consciousness among some of their producers that the format is particularly attractive to and appropriate for the tastes and listening patterns of rural women. Skuse (1999), for instance, has shown how the Afghan soap opera *New Home New Life*, holds a special place in rural Afghan women's lives. This is partly because the radio is one of their few links with the world beyond *purdah*, but it is mainly because it enables them to discuss topics surrounding gender relations via 'gossip' about the dramas' fictional characters. Fiske (1987:197) argues that soap operas, by virtue of their 'feminine aesthetic' even possess a liberating power, as they 'keep patriarchy under constant interrogation, they legitimate feminine values and thus produce self-esteem for the women who live by them.' Apart from the fact that serial dramas are relatively expensive to produce (Myers, 2002), there are no serious reasons why a social-issue based soap opera addressing women's issues could not be produced in Eritrea. If it was, then it would be following a well-proven strand of development communications in which soap operas seem to be achieving some noticeable effects (such as increased intra-family discussion of family planning, adoption of measures to prevent HIV/AIDS transmission, attendance at ante-natal clinics, public discussion of FGM) by dramatising subjects that have traditionally been seen as 'feminine' and 'private,' (see for e.g. Beckerleg, 1999; Leicester, no date; Fustukian, 1999; Singhal & Rogers, 1998).

### 7.3.2. Problems with Listening Centres

On the face of it, a woman with a listening centre in her village has easier access to radio than one without. However there are number of problems with Listening Centres, some of which have already been noted. At a national level, the main problem is the scarcity of such centres, such that the great majority of radio consumption, by both men and women, is done on a casual rather than an organised basis.

At the level of the Listening Centres themselves, women have difficulties in raising questions and starting discussions in the presence of the (invariably) male animator to whom they seem to need to 'show respect'. One obvious partial solution to this problem would be to make all Listening Centre animators female. This is the case in the AURAT project in Pakistan, where discussions around radio-based advice on women's agriculture and natural resource management is facilitated by female animators, in ways which seem to have achieved great popularity with ordinary women participants (Ahmad & Khan, 1994). It is also interesting to note in Ahmad and Khan's account that when recommendations are made on the radio, they are often first tried out by the animator herself, which encourages adoption by the women group members. It is this kind of inspirational action-based animation which is lacking in Eritrea, partly because of the lack of sufficiently well-trained female candidates to take on such roles.

Another problem is the difficulty for women of taking time out of domestic and other work to attend the classes. Part of the problem is a very basic question of whether, not only the individual woman, but her whole family and social circle, approves of and values opportunities for women's education. By contrast, in Mongolia, where the Gobi Women's Project has been providing a radio-based education programme for nomadic women, Robinson (1999:130) says that spousal support for it is such that if occasionally a woman misses the project's radio broadcast, her husband listens and takes notes for her. Apart from the fact that in Eritrea most men are illiterate too, it would be unusual for anything similar to happen; but it highlights how important it is for male heads of families and the local community as a whole to approve of and actively encourage women's education.

Instead, what we find in the Eritrean situation, is that, in some centres, sugar handouts from the government have been used as an incentive for women to attend classes. The official reasoning behind this is that education for women is seen as a key part of the general effort to reconstruct the country; it is, in the government's eyes, akin to the community works and public reconstruction projects (such as dam-building, school construction etc.) which are paid for in food aid. Thus, giving sugar to women attending literacy/listening classes is 'payment' for 'work.' But seen another way, it is an exercise in bribing people to become educated. It is questionable whether a women's education policy, founded, as it should be, on women themselves seeing the advantages in education for its own sake, is sustainable in this manner.

### **7.3.3. Domestic work-patterns**

For women with functioning radio-sets, being too busy with domestic work is the greatest obstacle to regular and attentive radio listening. This finding is interesting for the fact that it challenges the assumption that is made by several Western studies on women and radio, which claim that radio is a peculiarly 'woman's medium' because it can be listened to while doing other things. For example, Lacey asserts:

'...the radio remains particularly well suited as a channel for promoting the interests and expressions of women. At the heart of this relationship remains the advantage that radio has as a medium that enters the private sphere and that can be listened to while doing other things.' (Lacey, 2004)

And other scholars have commented on radio's privileged presence in the domestic sphere, as a backdrop to housework:

'radio occupies a very special relationship with women's lives, in that it is an explicit accompaniment to them – a commentary or a counterpoint' (Karpf, 1980).

Hobson (1980) says:

‘radio and television...are never mentioned as spare time...activities but are located by the women as integral parts of their day’ (quoted in Moores, p. 36).

Radio has also been characterised as a lifeline against women’s loneliness and isolation in the home, and even as a marker which breaks up the monotony of the day (Hobson, 1980). African commentators too, eg. Foadey (2004:1) have made a special case for radio in women’s lives, saying:

‘Although men own the majority of radio receivers, women can listen to programmes when they are doing their normal chores.’

Whilst radio no doubt has some advantages over other media for reaching women because of its usual location in the domestic space, what has been written about radio’s ability to reach women in the home needs to be understood in the context of what working in the home actually means in a rural Eritrean – indeed African - context. Compared with the relatively static ergonomics of a compact Western kitchen (and perhaps the Westernised urban settings in developing countries which Foadey may be more used to), where almost all cooking, washing and so on can be done with comparatively little moving about, respondents in Eritrea were continually moving in and out of the house, and around the yard or compound. Their work involves tending to small-stock outdoors, bringing fuel indoors, grinding grain outdoors, fetching water and wood from miles away, cooking indoors, washing their children outdoors, and so on<sup>69</sup>. Meanwhile, the household radio set (which, in Eritrea is invariably a fairly large Philips model) normally stayed still - playing in its designated position in the main living space of the house - often taking pride of place amongst the household possessions, and often with its own specially embroidered dust-cover, but often out of earshot as far as the busy women of the household were concerned. As already observed, women almost never pick up the radio set and never move outside the homestead with it for the purpose of listening socially, or while walking to the well, waiting at the clinic, working in the fields, milking the goats,

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<sup>69</sup> Tronvoll (1998:79) observed that in Mai Weini, a Highland village in Eritrea, ‘the female members of a household spend an average of four hours a day gathering firewood, and about one hour a day fetching water for domestic use.’

or doing the various other daily tasks which take them beyond the confines of the house. This pattern is obviously gendered behaviour, since, in the great majority of cases, radio sets are bought by men and are therefore regarded as belonging to them<sup>70</sup>. With this observation in mind, it is interesting to note that Spitulnik (2000:160), in her study of 'radio culture' in Zambia, also makes the point that radio may not in fact be such a 'domestic technology' as some may suggest. Taking this fact into account, then, is important for tailoring radio output to where and how Eritrean women are listening. Formats and broadcasting techniques must be found which cater for this fragmented type of listening pattern, which is so typical for rural women.

#### **7.3.4. Problems with attention**

The research results record the fact that Eritrean women regard their domestic workloads as affecting their ability to concentrate on radio content. About a third of the sample said that although the radio was on in their households on a regular basis, they rarely or never paid attention to it; consequently they were not able to name the type of programme being broadcast at the time they had last 'listened' to the radio (see Chapter 5).

This must be partly a consequence of physically moving out of audio-range, as discussed above. However, it must mainly be due to the nature of their work, which is often tiring, noisy, disjointed and involves a significant degree of multi-tasking, such that paying close attention to the radio becomes very difficult. This is perhaps most vividly summed up by a mother from Gahtelay who said: **'I listen to songs but I can't remember which ones. I just can't pay attention because first one child cries, then another and I can't concentrate.'**

It is interesting to note that Skuse's (1997:9) work among Afghan women radio listeners found a similar pattern, and Claypole and Daka (1993) also report that the largest proportion of non-listeners in Zambia is found among rural women:

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<sup>70</sup> These observations are corroborated by Tronvoll (1996:29) in the context of his study of the referendum process in the rural highlands of Eritrea in 1992/93

'Significantly, many of these 'non-listening' survey respondents describe themselves as being around and hearing radios but not ever listening to it' (cited in Spitulnik 2000:152). Without over-emphasising the problem – the majority of the sample of Eritrean female regular radio listeners *were* relatively attentive - there does nevertheless seem to be an element of radio as background noise. There are obviously different degrees and types of listening; from using the music on radio as pleasant background noise, through to paying close attention to a speech radio programme. But it points to the need for more arresting content and more appropriate formats that allow for fragmented listening, as discussed in Chapter 8.

## **7.4. Attitudinal issues**

### **7.4.1. The 'need to be educated' idea**

In the findings, a paradox presents itself in the fact that significant numbers of (mainly older) women listeners believe they have to be educated *already* to benefit from educational programmes. This perception is pervasive and is affecting the degree to which women, particularly middle aged and older ones, access and pay attention to the radio. It is a barrier that deters them from even trying to pay attention to radio content. It is therefore pertinent to ask whether this barrier is real or imagined; a cultural phenomenon or a psychological reality?

There may be some substance to this idea that adults learn better if they have already received some schooling. For instance, Abadzi (1990:12) points out that the amount of time people can pay attention is to some extent trainable and that educated people seem to remain attentive for longer (though she points out the reason for this is a matter of debate). Furthermore, Findahl and Hoijer (1984) have suggested that TV news is for the initiated, and that 'news reports lack background, are fragmented, leave key concepts unexplained', such that only those who have prior knowledge about an issue can 'put the pieces together and make sense of the messages' (quoted in Windahl, Signitzer et.al. 1992:147). A similar phenomenon may therefore also hold true for unschooled radio listeners in Eritrea; the less they have had practice at paying attention and the less knowledge they have of the world, perhaps the less they can genuinely understand the radio.

However, the findings of this study show that when they are given the opportunity to listen attentively, there is, in fact, no significant difference in the comprehension levels of those with some years of schooling and those without. The points in the radio extract that were not understood by unschooled listeners were *also not understood* by their more educated fellows. Interestingly, Skuse found a similar phenomenon in Afghanistan where many rural women likened their uneducated state to that of animals: 'We are blind like *haiwanaat* (animals)... we listen [to the radio] and then we forget" (Skuse, 1997:9). He makes the point that these purported difficulties are less a product of psychology than of a culture in which education excludes women and is the preserve of men: 'normative culture tells these women they should *not* remember or that they have *no* business understanding the outside world' (Skuse, 1999:241). Furthermore, the 'blindness' that women report feeling in relation to understanding and remembering the content of speech radio seems to disappear when it comes to the soap opera, *New Home New Life*. In the Eritrean situation it is more customary for women to listen to news and current affairs programmes than it is in Afghanistan; nevertheless, there is still an element of women losing interest in radio content which they feel is not of immediate concern to them. Much of the reason for this must be due to cultural factors relating to what they feel they are supposed to like and understand. This brings us to issues of gender and self-confidence.

#### **7.4.2. Issues around gender and self-confidence**

The 'need to be educated' idea links with feelings of low self-esteem among the non-literate and non-educated. Although low self-esteem must affect non-literate men to some extent, this is largely a gender issue because, in Eritrea, women and girls continue to be excluded from education in favour of men and boys *and* are regarded by (patriarchal) society as second class citizens.

Significantly, Maletzke's psychological model of the mass communication process, reserves spaces for 'the receiver's self-image' and for 'the receiver's personality structure' (1963), as two of the determining factors in a mass-media receiver's selection from content. This research seems to confirm that a receiver's degree of self-confidence plays a part in the way they select what they will listen to, and what

attention they will give it. Thus, Eritrean women (particularly the older ones who have never been to school, and have the most entrenched attitudes about women's proper place in relation to men), because of their low self-images as women and as uneducated, tend to avoid any radio content regarded as intellectual, and therefore perpetuate their own belief in the weakness of their own intellects.

Ngechu (1992:63), in her study of female radio listeners in Kenya, brings out this issue of women's self-image as less intellectually capable than men, and also exposes it for what it is, namely, a gender construct.

'most women farmers are used to giving their husbands and sons prominence even where they are the experts. One farmer told the team, "What can I tell you, my children? I know nothing". Yet, when she finally began talking and discussing issues of access to the radio set and its utilisation within the family, the team members were humbled by her perceptions of the dynamics involved in the use of the technology at home by women farmers.'

Other examples of this false-consciousness among rural women may be seen in, for example, Skuse (1999:242) who quotes 'Shakila, a female respondent from Jalalabad City who says: 'my husband has had no education, but he likes to know about the world [news]. Because he is a man he can understand it all'.' Additionally, in Vlassof's work on health information for rural women, Sierra Leonean women are quoted as sometimes deliberately avoiding opportunities for learning, because they were afraid of 'standing over their husbands' heads with knowledge' (UNDP/World Bank/WHO, 1997b):38.

These gender barriers notwithstanding, it is clear from several case-studies of work with women's groups that women's intellectual and analytical skills can develop, along with their self-confidence, when they have opportunities to discuss, exchange and learn, on their own terms, about issues they know and care about. This is evidenced in the context of discussions about the feasibility of using radio to disseminate agricultural research findings to small-scale farmers; it is interesting to note that Ngechu's research discussion gave her women interviewees 'confidence...and also educated, empowered and encouraged them in their tasks.' They saw the possibility of a radio listening group as a kind of extension of the

empowering discussions they had had with researchers and felt such a group would 'contribute more to the process of improving their self-image and build their capacities as women farmers' (1992:63). Again, in the case of the DTR groups in Southern Africa, findings from several studies show a marked increase in self-confidence among women, which links with the will and ability to engage actively with radio content (Matewa, 2002; Warnock, 2001).

#### **7.4.3. Attitudes towards the radio**

As pointed out in the description of methodology (Chapter 4), this study found it difficult to obtain direct answers from rural women about their attitudes towards radio, mainly, it was assumed, for reasons of courtesy bias due to radio's association with the Government. Another reason may be related to listeners not having had the chance to develop their critical faculties because of not having had the opportunity to compare or contrast the output with anything else. Kasoma (1992) makes the point that audience-testing is much more meaningful in media-educated societies where people are familiar with a variety of media and also with different formats.

Those attitudes that *were* discerned (positive or negative) were gathered from indirect responses. Certainly, radio is associated with the government, the administration and officialdom. But it is also associated with leisure, time-off, joyfulness and opportunities to dance and sing; also, at times, its associations are with sadness, war and loss. Furthermore, the radio seems to connote everything that is citified, educated, and in the public domain. Whether or not radio is trusted on politics, on the whole rural women seem to have confidence in the educational and developmental programmes, and, in many respects, radio is seen as a validator and confirmer of information.

The findings show that some respondents feel that because subjects like menstruation and breast-feeding practices (and other subjects pertaining to the personal and female domain) were being mentioned on the radio that the information was therefore not only true, but it was to be obeyed (or at least respected as being received wisdom). Part of this stems from the fact that radio in Eritrea is government controlled; hence the sentiment expressed by some respondents that they would not

dare to go against radio advice, presumably for fear of some kind of public reproach. But another aspect of radio, whether government controlled or not, is that it seems to serve as a validator of information and knowledge, by dint of its public nature. The very fact of radio mentioning new ideas or hitherto hidden experiences and knowledge confers credibility and respectability to those ideas and experiences.

This is evidenced in other parts of the world; for example, in Mali, the researcher found that villagers said they were more likely to adopt certain forestry techniques promoted by a local NGO after they had heard the same advice publicised over the radio. One local NGO worker said:

‘The villagers are saying ‘it’s on the radio so it must be true, the whole of Mali is hearing it’. As an NGO we are sometimes seen as coming into villages and evangelising mad schemes. But now the villagers are hearing it on the radio as well, they realise our contact farmers are not so mad after all.’ Boukoum quoted in (Myers, 1998b:29)

In Nigeria, Usman points out that one of the most positive aspects of the Nigerian government’s educational radio programmes aimed at Fulbe women was that, from their point of view, it had ‘made them known’ as an ethnic group (Usman, 2001:97). The same phenomenon can be seen among some of the DTR listening groups in Southern Africa, where women are reported to feel empowered by the fact their problems and preoccupations are broadcast on national radio (Matewa, 2002); and again, in Afghanistan, teachers for whom there is a new distance-training radio programme, have expressed their enthusiasm for it partly because it is felt to be bringing their problems to public attention (von Seibold, 2003). Radio seems, therefore, to have certain clear advantages over other educational and developmental media precisely because of this validating power, due to its nature as a mass and public medium. Again, we see how the effects of radio can depend on other factors than its actual content, namely the way it is perceived by its audiences, and the power they may ascribe to it.

## 7.5. Uses and Gratifications<sup>71</sup>

Educational/developmental programmes offered on Eritrean radio seem to be offering *some* information on *some* of the general areas in which women are interested (such as kitchen-gardening, child-birth and women's health issues). But there are three interlinked issues arising here: one relates to the usability and relevance of the information given, another relates to women listeners' ability to question and to engage with that information, and the final one relates to the extent to which radio gratifies their desires for information and entertainment.

### 7.5.1. Usability and Relevance of Information

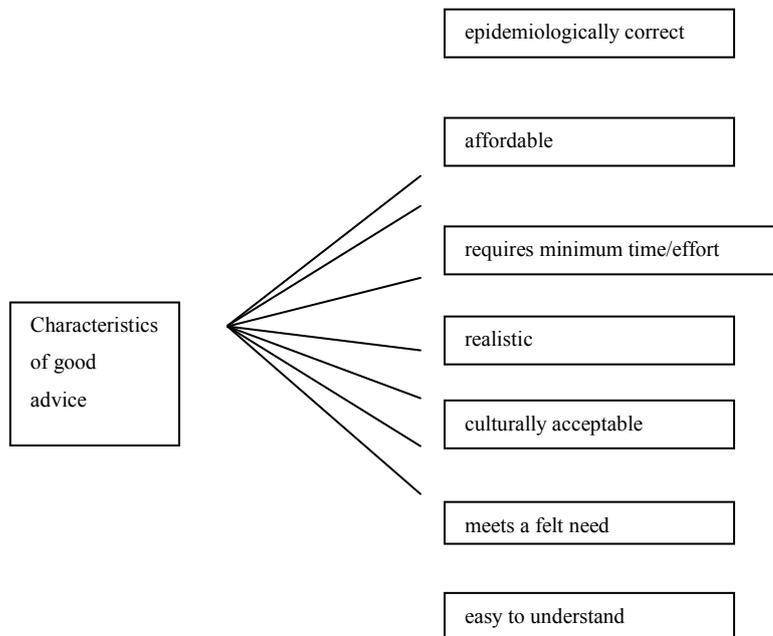
On the usability of content, the findings show that sometimes broadcasters treat subjects which the rural female audience finds interesting. However, these seem to be the exception rather than the rule; not only are educational programmes relatively low on women's 'favourite programmes' list, but radio itself is not an important information source on subjects closest to the concerns of every-day, such as agriculture or health.

Much of the explanation for this must be due to the lack of relevance of the content to women listeners' lives. For example, examination of the EMMP scripts dealing with poultry-keeping reveals that much of the advice is un-practicable and unaffordable by poor rural households (giving of anti-biotics, construction of specialised chicken-coops, giving of special food, clean water etc.). The same may be said for programmes about rural sanitation which detail techniques for constructing improved pit-latrines, without acknowledging that only a tiny percentage of the Eritrean population has access to pit latrines at all. It is therefore no wonder that respondents make comments such as **'We can't eat what the radio recommends. We don't have it'** and **'We've never practiced [what the radio tells us] because of lack of cash'** (see Chapter 5).

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<sup>71</sup> This term was first used by Blumer and Katz in 1974 (see McQuail 1994:296), and developed into a tradition within audience-centred mass-media research. It emphasises an active audience which make conscious and motivated choices about mass-media messages. The researcher is aware that uses and gratifications theory has developed in various directions and has also been criticised in some quarters, for example, for not taking social context into sufficient account. However, to elaborate on this debate would be a diversion. The terms are used here because they are believed to conveniently sum up two of the most important conditions which can help predict and understand rural women's behaviour vis a vis radio.

Again, Eritrean broadcasters could perhaps benefit from applying some of the basic advice in such texts as Hubley (1993), which point out the characteristics of good [health] advice:



**Fig. 4: Characteristics of good advice - from Hubley (1993:52)**

This, of course begs the question of how broadcasters are supposed to know what is realistic, affordable and so on. The obvious answer is research. This is elaborated-on in the following chapter.

### **7.5.2. Difficulties with questioning/feedback**

On the issue of questioning and feedback, the evidence gathered regarding the further questions women had about the information they had heard, shows that there is a clear need among women listeners to question and to give and receive feedback on the topics covered. At present, the only opportunity they have to engage directly with the information-givers (i.e. broadcasters) is by letter to Asmara, or via an official

animator at a Listening Centre. But, as the preceding chapters made clear, both these mechanisms are extremely limited.

Yet questioning, exchange and debate should be at the heart of any learning experience. One does not necessarily need to be a follower of the likes of Freire (1970, 1973) or Illich (1976) to appreciate the need for the active involvement of learners, particularly when dealing with adults. Even the relatively traditional GoE acknowledges the need for a feedback/feed-forward loop between communicators and listeners in order to overcome radio's inherent weakness as a one-way medium, which is why it has notionally based its radio education programme around a structure of Listening Centres.

However, as previously noted, an enormous burden then falls on the animators who are mostly insufficiently trained, experienced, supported or remunerated. At the Listening Centre sessions observed, there were several lost opportunities for learning, when women listeners asked for points of information, (e.g. **'why do women's ankles swell in pregnancy, and is it dangerous?'**) which the animator could not answer. Either such a question was not anticipated in his 'subject guide', or he was not sufficiently well-trained, or both. Furthermore, there were other more general issues raised about agricultural problems (e.g. **'How to build reservoirs? How to conserve water? – these are our problems'** (see Chapter 5)), where allowing a debate to develop among other participants in the group might have been fruitful, but yet was not invited or encouraged by the animator. In a more participatory context, the above examples of questions and discussion-points might have been recognized as articulations of common problems, and welcomed as a stimulus to a discussion regarding what the radio-listeners - and perhaps the wider community and the authorities - could do to solve their health concerns and their water problems.

### **7.5.3. Women's radio preferences**

The findings show that news and entertainment (encompassing songs, music and drama) are rural Eritrean women's favourite programmes. It is interesting to compare their liking for news with findings on women's listening/viewing habits in other parts of the World. For example, Hobson (1980) in her study of television viewing among working class housewives in the UK found that preference for programme-types was highly gendered, with women rejecting news, current affairs, scientific programmes and anything relating to politics or war. Instead, they preferred to watch comedy shows, soap operas, light entertainment and so on. Hobson makes the point that the type of television that women preferred constituted a 'feminine world', which was seen by the women themselves as somehow inferior to the 'masculine world', and which automatically took second place if, for example, their male partners wanted to watch a news programme.

However, in Zimbabwe, Matewa (2002) finds that among rural female heads of households, the preference is for (in order of preference) funeral messages, then news, then 'cultural programmes' then 'greetings and music'(Matewa, 2002). Similarly, Ngechu (1992) finds that female farmers in Kenya have a clear preference for news, then for religious programmes; Ceesay (2000) in Niger finds that in Hausa culture, 'twice as many women as men preferred to discuss politics', much to the surprise of broadcasters at the national radio station; Usman (2001) in Nigeria finds a similar pattern, namely a preference among Fulbe women for general information first, then entertainment. However, in Kaduna state, Nigeria, Omotayo et al. (1997), find that the 80 women they interviewed rated music above all else and that news comes lowest on their list of favourites. Clearly women's radio preferences vary according to milieu, culture and, no doubt the quality of, and trust in, radio output in different places. What is clear is that what may be true of gendered listening patterns in one culture, may not hold true in another, and there is clearly nothing intrinsically feminine about preference for or rejection of hard news.

Perhaps one of the reasons behind Eritrean women's interest in the news is because they have been affected by war for so long, such that it has made everyone (men and women alike) interested in current affairs, since these are, in effect their own affairs. For example, during the liberation war, the names of fighters killed in combat were announced during the news on *Dimtsi Haffash*. One respondent, an older woman from Awlietseru, said:

**‘My son was killed in Massawa. We heard the news three days before the radio announced it, but then when we heard it on the radio my husband started crying, but I said that we should be proud, and when the song of the fighters comes on – ‘Gubuzai, Gubuzai’, I don’t cry but I ululate with joy.’**

Despite the bravura of this statement, families all over the country must have been terribly affected by such devastating news; often heard for the first time over the radio. Also, by listening to the radio, rural people could get a sense of how near or far they were from the front line, and possible danger. Thus, in Eritrea, paying attention to radio news has been a life-or-death matter. Similarly, Matewa (2002) concludes that, for the Zimbabwean women he surveyed, radio with its local news and funeral notices, plays the role of a rural telephone, giving them information that touches their lives directly.

These findings about women’s radio preferences have implications for our understanding of the ways in which the rural female audience in Eritrea is receiving and using radio-based information. Eritrean broadcasters do not seem to be aware of what types of programmes women prefer listening to, since no surveys of this kind have been done. Generally, they are sceptical about the amount of radio listening women do, and about the extent to which women can engage with and concentrate on radio, especially speech radio. But most seem to work on the assumption that women enjoy and respond to the programmes made specifically for them:

**‘Our women do not listen to the radio because they don’t have them, this is a little obstacle for us. And even if they do have radios they don’t have time. But if the programme concerns them, they try to listen... Most women listen to the Mother and Child programme, but on agriculture I doubt it.’**

(G.A.1996)

The fact that these findings show that women have a clear liking for news, and that it was the mothers in the households surveyed who emerged as the single most frequent users of radio, was fresh information for Eritrean broadcasters. Contrary to this broadcaster’s assumptions, women are clearly interested in obtaining agricultural

information, as both this and Garforth's (2001) research shows. Whereas broadcasters believe that it is the programmes which they make especially for them that exert the most influence on women, it looks much more likely that news, songs and dramas, and the attitudes and messages which are consciously or sub-consciously encoded in these kinds of formats, are probably having more profound effects on women listeners than the more direct and overtly message-laden educational and developmental programmes made expressly for their benefit.

## 7.6. Radio's Effects

*'It's not only that we learn more, but the radio's changing us...'. A. from Awlietseru*

In connection with the previous point, it may legitimately be asked to what extent *is* radio influencing rural women in Eritrea. At its most blunt, the question could be: is radio educating them and/or developing them? By virtue of using Maletzke's model, this study has shown just how difficult it is to discern effects, because of the great number of variables and interactions that are at play in the communication process. The researcher is also aware of the methodological difficulties of proving impact from her own experiences in evaluation (in other countries than Eritrea), which, on the whole, have had to rely on anecdote and on extrapolations from small samples (see (Myers, 2003; Myers et al., 1995; Myers, Harford, & Skuse, 2000)).<sup>72</sup>

However, although this study did not set out explicitly to answer the impact question, some anecdotal evidence was gleaned as to the effects that radio may be having on respondents, as documented in Chapter 5. If an overview is taken of the kinds of effects recorded, the impression is one of a gradual shift in attitudes and behaviour over time towards certain aspects of modernity. An exploration of the word 'modern' and all that it connotes could, of course, be the subject of another long cultural or ethnographic study, but, in the context of rural Eritrea it might be summed up as that which is of the younger generation; of urban ways of life; of women's emancipation; of Western medicine and scientific approaches to agriculture and of aspirations towards formal education and salaried work. What this seems to imply is something

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<sup>72</sup> For an overview of methods and approaches in media impact assessment, see for e.g. (Flay & Cook, 1981) and for a wide variety of examples of impact assessment and methods in development communications see the Communications Initiative website: [www.comminit.com/evaluation-results.html](http://www.comminit.com/evaluation-results.html)

akin to the 'modernization effect' as elaborated by the likes of Schramm and Rogers in the 1960s and 70s. However, it does not mean that this effect is automatic (or necessarily desirable in all its ramifications) but, as the findings show, rather something which is a complex set of negotiations and adjustments on both sides of the communication equation.

## **Chapter 8: Broadcasting to Rural Women – Discussion and Conclusions**

### **8.1. Introduction**

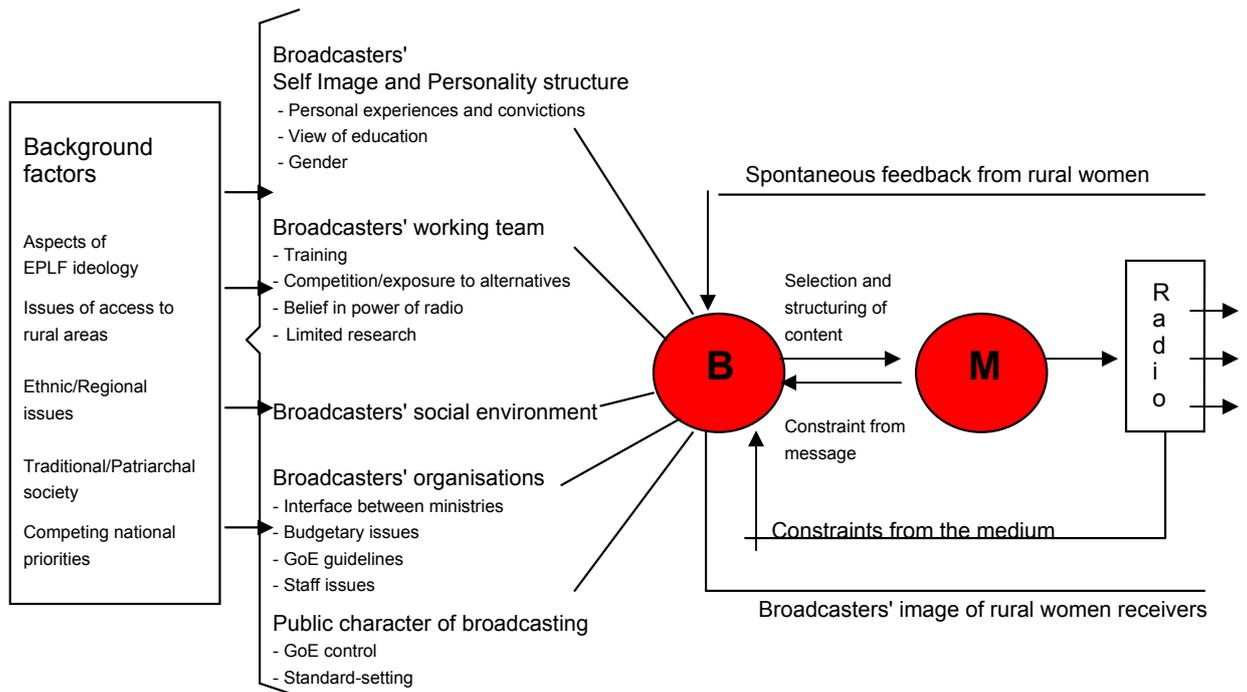
This chapter discusses the main findings regarding broadcasters, and, in the light of this, and the discussion of women listeners in the previous chapter, proposes some pointers for communication planners as to how educational and developmental broadcasting could be improved for rural women.

### **8.2. Influences on Eritrean broadcasters**

#### **8.2.1. A model showing factors influencing radio production**

In the preceding chapter a model is presented which shows the factors influencing women's interest in and uptake of radio programmes; a development of the right-hand (receivers') side of the Maletzke model. Another model is presented overleaf (Fig. 5) which completes the whole picture, since it develops the left-hand side of the Maletzke model and presents the factors influencing the production (the selection and structuring) of radio content by Eritrean broadcasters.

**Fig. 5: Factors influencing the production of educational and developmental programmes for rural women in Eritrea (after Maletzke 1963)**



B = Eritrean Broadcaster M = Message (Education and Developmental Programmes for Rural Women)

### 8.2.1.i. Overview of the model

At the centre of the model is the individual Eritrean broadcaster (B) (an adaptation of Maletzke's 'C' for communicator). By broadcaster is meant those who have immediate responsibility for writing, recording, compiling, and often presenting, programmes. He or she selects and structures content to form a 'message' (M), which, for our purposes is an educational or developmental programme aimed wholly or partially at rural women listeners. All elements surrounding and feeding into 'B' are factors or inputs which influence how 'B' selects and structures messages.

Starting at the right of the model, 'Radio' is the medium itself, i.e. the broadcasting apparatus which transmits sound to the listeners. In Eritrea this has its own constraints that affect the broadcaster (see 8.2.6.iv ). Below 'Radio', there is a line running between the broadcaster and off towards the receiver-side that represents the broadcaster's image of the receiver, which, as shall be argued, is an image of rural women which is based on assumptions rather than on direct contact or research. The top line, feeding in from the right (receiver side) of the model, represents feedback from the audience, to the broadcaster, which, as shall be discussed, is insufficient and therefore problematic.

To the left of 'B' are listed all the immediate influences on the individual broadcaster: his/her self-image, characteristics of working team, organisational ethos and so forth. (Maletzke's model has been adapted slightly here, by combining communicator's self-image with personality structure because the research looks at broadcasters as a group, not at individual personalities.) An explanation of these influences forms the main bulk of the discussion below. To the far left are listed the background factors over which individual broadcasters have no control, but which, indirectly and, on the whole negatively, affect the immediate factors such as broadcasters' image, working team, organisations, and so on. These include aspects of EPLF ideology and the fact of competing national priorities in this new and war-torn country.

## **8.2.2. Broadcasters' Self-Image**

### 8.2.2.i. Personal experiences and convictions

Eritrean broadcasters have a firm sense of self-belief. That is not to say they are individualistic; rather, they have a strong sense of shared mission, related to a sense of national duty. As outlined in chapter 3, the ideology and methods of the EPLF in the liberated areas before independence are of great influence on the way almost everything to do with education and development is done in contemporary Eritrea. The influence of these methods on broadcasting is no exception, particularly since most broadcasters are ex-fighters. From personal experience and conviction, they all therefore have a normative sense of what a broadcaster ought to be; that is, not a reflector or an investigator of events, but rather a crusader for a modern, unified and self-reliant Eritrea.

Whilst they acknowledge that it is difficult for them to access rural areas and mix with rural people on a regular basis, they do not view this as problematic; in fact they tend to see themselves as rooted in rural culture, either by virtue of having been born in a village or by having been fighters during the liberation war - or both. They also acknowledge a literate/non-literate divide in Eritrean society, but rather than worrying that this might make communication difficult; instead, they firmly regard themselves as having a duty towards educating and guiding those who have not received schooling. They seem to have moved away from a tenet that was, arguably, once at the heart of the EPLF approach to social change: the view that rural people have outlooks which may run contrary to the norms of modern, urban and schooled societies, but which are equally valid ways of seeing the world, and which may in some senses be specialist or even expert knowledge.

To explain how a positive conviction in favour of participatory education for the masses can turn into a paternalistic and tutelary style, it is necessary to understand that there are both progressive and authoritarian aspects to EPLF ideology. To acknowledge this fact reveals and explains a fascinating contradiction at the heart of the Eritrean approach to education and development. On the one hand, the EPLF's philosophy was based on a great spirit of self-reliance, of closeness to the peasantry,

of socialist and feminist principles, and of respect for aspects of rural culture (see Context chapter). This was, it has been argued, reflected in practice in a very participative and people-centred style of education of rural people in the field, particularly as regards literacy (Firebrace & Holland, 1986; Gottesman, 1998; Kinnock, 1988). Gottesman, in particular, argues strongly that the EPLF's participatory style, in the pursuit of adult literacy has continued into the PFDJ's post-independence practices in education. On the other hand, it is possible to point to a much more heavy-handed approach which relied on coercion to induce obedience and control of villagers (Connell, 1993; Pool, 2001; Tronvoll, 1998). In this view, the EPLF was at best paternalistic and at worse secretive and coercive. That the PFDJ 'came from the field' – and therefore has credibility and broad popular support - is a theme that runs through Eritrean political culture (Pool, 2003), but depending on one's point of view, this either gives the government continuing legitimacy or is a currency which is losing its value.

Now that independence has been won, GoE rhetoric is largely about forging a 'united, plural and onward looking' society (Provisional Government of Eritrea, 1991). Whilst, in theory there could still be room for a participatory, even Freire-style, empowerment-agenda *vis à vis* the grassroots, what seems to be emerging is a liberal approach to adult education and development, rather than a liberation approach. This liberal agenda entails education as a means to a nation-building end: education to increase human capital and a literate and productive workforce, rather than education as a means of empowering individuals and communities to 'discuss courageously the problems of their context and to intervene in that context' (Freire, 1973:33).

It is therefore now possible to argue that broadcasters have forgotten, or perhaps modified, the analysis that the fighters once had of 'the oppressor and the oppressed' (UNICEF, 1994) and of redressing power inequalities, which was prevalent during the liberation war, and have assumed a position of power without acknowledging that they too could legitimately be open to challenge. Hence, the marked paternalism of tone which is evident in much of the output aimed at rural listeners.

### 8.2.2.ii. View of Education

Another reason for their 'top-down' style to the approach of education through radio is related to broadcasters' own experience of education. Whether brought up under the Dergue, or under the EPLF in the liberated areas, broadcasters have been used to a teacher-centred manner of learning where students are required to sit quietly, listen and absorb a teacher's words (Highfield quoted in Gottesman 1998:196). Therefore that which is educational is perhaps, in their view, to be equated with this passive style of learning. Especially when writing and producing for an audience imagined to be seated attentively listening at a Listening Centre, the EMMP producers re-produce their own experience of schooling in their on-air versions of educational lessons.

Furthermore, elements of pleasure and entertainment are viewed, to some extent, as incompatible with serious acquisition of knowledge. This is acknowledged by Abraha, who, as Senior Adviser at the Ethiopian Mol in the 1980's, wrote 'unfortunately there is a tendency in broadcasting authorities to confuse light and less formal programming with frivolous programming!' (Abraha, 1986:184). He also notes that 'audience interest and participation is best achieved when the tone and general approach...is less formal and more intimate'. Ironically, his beliefs seem not to have been carried through by those now in the Eritrean EMMP, some of whom were working under his auspices before liberation, but who have used the lecture-style format consistently before and since.

### 8.2.2.iii Gender

The gender of the individual broadcaster influences output for rural women on a number of counts. For example, male broadcasters, when they have the chance to undertake field-trips, will have less direct access to women's circles than their female colleagues and will be less able to talk freely with rural women and girls. The obvious consequence of this is less direct feedback from women listeners. Conversely, the same cultural norms which govern the acceptability of women mixing freely with men outside their immediate families will constrain female broadcasters when *they* need to travel by public transport and make overnight stays in

inaccessible areas in order to gather interviews or undertake research.

Futhermore, the fact that women fighters are to some extent seen as 'honorary men' may itself hinder some of the women broadcasters' contact with the more traditional sections of the female rural audience.

Meanwhile, women broadcasters are in relatively strong demand within their organisations, if only for the fact that women's voices are thought to be needed on-air, especially for talks on 'women's subjects' and for acting in dialogues. Women make up about a third of the DH staff and about a quarter of the EMMP staff : this is a better rate than the continental average which is that women overall have less than a 25% share of media jobs in Africa (Gallagher, 1997). Moreover, when it comes to news-reading, Eritrean radio does not seem to subscribe to the principle, prevalent until quite recently in much of Western radio, that women should not read the news because it was felt that their voices did not convey sufficient gravitas (Cramer, 1993).

But, while the working atmosphere for an individual woman journalist in Eritrea may not be characterised by the same sexism that would seem to be prevalent in many news-rooms around the world (Gallagher, 1981; Munyakho, 2000), neither is it a place of radical feminist analysis. On the whole, both male and female broadcasters seem to regard women's issues as those pertaining to the reproductive sphere, and – with the exception of some interesting programmes about FGM (see Appendix 5) - there is a reluctance to tackle or to investigate sensitive gender issues pertaining to, for example, issues around abortion<sup>73</sup>, domestic violence, rape during military service<sup>74</sup>, and other matters which seem to be the subject of private, rather than public debate.

Women broadcasters, as such, do not seem to regard themselves as any more or less responsible for treating strategic gender issues than their male counterparts. So, while it is evident that all Eritrean broadcasters have strong self-images as modernisers, it is interesting to note that neither male nor female broadcasters seem to regard themselves as leaders of opinion on women's strategic gender issues.

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<sup>73</sup> Currently, the law forbids abortion except when it is performed to save the pregnant woman from grave or permanent danger to her life or health (UNESA, no date)

<sup>74</sup> This has recently been alleged on various internet sites (see for eg. "When rape is a requirement of military service" at [www.biddho.de/portal/printout2944.html](http://www.biddho.de/portal/printout2944.html))

### 8.2.3. Broadcasters' Working Teams

Despite some differences between the working teams of EMMP and DH; they share more similarities. Both, for example, lack training and exposure to alternative methods of production. As described in chapter 6, almost all individual broadcasters complain of this, and assert that they are working virtually 'blind'. They also share much the same outlook on the power of radio to influence their listeners, and on norms and values about women and the rural audience.

#### 8.2.3.i. Training

As noted in chapter 6, there is a great felt-need among broadcasters in Eritrea for more training and there is an acute sense, particularly among those at DH, that, because their young adult-hood was spent as fighters, they have never had the chance to obtain formal qualifications. Their felt-needs are wide-ranging, from acting techniques to skills relating to editing and other technical aspects of production.

Meanwhile, in common with much training for broadcasters in Africa, the training on offer is of an in-service type, aimed at strengthening or upgrading skills whilst, at the same time, avoiding taking them away from their posts for too long. Given the *ad hoc* nature of much of the training opportunities on offer, there is a danger that broadcasters gather a rather confusing assortment of advice, techniques and approaches. Another disadvantage of one-off workshops for journalists in development, as Lyra (2004) points out, is that they invariably focus on the journalists and not on the journalists' working conditions, such that systemic problems are not remedied:

'In the short term, workshops look good. Their 'impact' can be measured by the attendance and the number of...broadcast stories produced right after the event – a guaranteed success, since editors already expect reporters to produce a couple of stories to compensate [for] their absence. Real, long-term impact is another tale.' (Lyra, 2004:3)

As discussed below, some of these systemic problems in the Eritrean case are related to the strength of government control on the broadcast system and the lack of scope for decentralisation. Others relate to the fact that training workshops are in danger of showing broadcasters what they could do given more resources, like transport, studio time, a research budget and so on, only to leave them without these resources when the workshop is over.

#### 8.2.3.ii. Lack of exposure to alternatives, Lack of competition

Meanwhile, for lack of exposure to alternatives, the output of almost all the EMMP and a large part of DH adheres to an old-fashioned lecture-style format. Although it would be unfair to say that all the educational and developmental programmes in Eritrea were monotonous lectures, there is still a substantial proportion that are. To an outside observer/listener used to the fast-paced style of most contemporary speech radio elsewhere in the world, the Eritrean approach seems immensely old-fashioned. Even back in the 1970's UNESCO radio manuals were warning broadcasters against tedious homilies ('What is worse than a dull classroom lecture? Answer: The same lecture broadcast over radio' (Theroux, 1978)). Yet, Eritrea seems to have been left behind in terms of its broadcasting style.

There are various reasons for this. The most obvious is that a straight recorded lecture is technically easy and inexpensive. Budgetary constraints and technical limitations are ever present; it takes time, staff and a certain amount of equipment to produce, for example, a multi-piece magazine programme, edited together smoothly with music and actuality. The GoE guideline of 40% educational content must also be fulfilled, such that making, repeating and translating a handful of regular lecture-programmes each week goes a substantial way to meeting this requirement for DH broadcasters. Reliance on secondary sources of information, such as reports from ministries or interviews with experts such as doctors or agronomists tends easily to result in long, monotonous radio.

However, it is also broadcasters' lack of exposure to alternatives which makes them perceive lectures as a tried and trusted formula. No broadcasters, except for the higher policy-makers, have been funded to travel outside Eritrea; they therefore have no practical exposure to any other countries' ways of structuring broadcasting and

making programmes. Ways, for example, of mixing education with entertainment are little known. Neither have they seen, in practice, examples of how listening centres could be made to work in more participatory ways. The reasons behind this are partly simple budgetary constraints in the face of competing national priorities. However, it is possible that there are more repressive reasons behind this, and that officials at the tops of the MoI and the MoE consciously wish to limit broadcasters' exposure to democratic alternatives. There may be a fear among the higher echelons of the MoI and the MoE of exposing staff to too many alternatives in case this radicalises them and turns them into critics of the present system (A.A., 2003).

#### 8.2.3.iii. Belief in the power of radio

Something else which unites broadcasters in their working teams is a belief, held in-common, in the potency of radio as a medium of persuasion. Given the monopoly they are in, the small size of the country, and the seeming popularity of the government post-independence, it is perhaps no wonder that, as one broadcaster put it, they see '95 percent of the population relying on *Dimtsi Haffash*' (W.G.1996). A related reason is that many on the broadcast team have witnessed first-hand the propaganda power of radio during the liberation war.

The fact that they have this belief goes some way to explaining why Eritrean broadcasters rely on the traditional formats discussed above. It would also explain why they talk, for example, about 'hammering the message and information' (W.G. 1996). It is arguable that if they did not see radio as having a very direct effect on a trusting and receptive audience, they would not use such blunt and unimaginative formats, but would, instead, find creative ways to entice listeners to pay more attention to educational and developmental output.

#### 8.2.3.iv. Limited Research and Contact with Rural Women

Perhaps the most glaring, yet unacknowledged contradiction in Eritrean broadcasting is that the authorities have, on the one hand, made policy commitments to prioritising women and girls as targets of education and development, and have set up the

EMMP partly to fulfil this aim, yet, on the other hand, they have made no serious or concerted effort to find out what women's educational and developmental priorities actually are, nor to foreground women's prior knowledge, voices, needs and aspirations on-air. Thus, for lack of regular contact with the audience, broadcasters are mostly running on assumptions and stereotyped images of what rural women need in terms of developmental advice and educational content.

Despite this, they have got *some* of these basic assumptions roughly right, from listeners' point of view. For example, the timings for the EMMP programmes and the 'Mother and Child' slot seem to suit most women respondents. Care has been taken to allocate women presenters to women's issue topics, which seems to be popular. Occasionally - and this is normally done by DH, rather than EMMP - there are dramas and dialogues (for example, the 'menstruation programme') which elicit positive responses. However, few of these topics are treated in any systematic way that elicits feedback or debate.

There is still a clear lack of primary research into women's multiple roles and needs. The present study shows that agricultural issues and women's other productive roles are a particular lacuna. Other research, for example Garforth (2001), points to the fact that increasing numbers of women are finding themselves having to take on men's traditional work, such as ploughing and sowing; this suggests that there may be aspects of Eritrean women's work that broadcasters may be missing.

In Eritrea, there are constraints of time, budget, and lack of space in the schedule for detailed treatment of women's concerns. There is also the fact that broadcasters have to rely on source material and on checking their facts with Asmara-based specialists, most of whom are men, and who may not, themselves, be aware of rural women's needs in much detail. The danger is that the situation produced is the classic system described by Mody (1991:26) in which development messages are sent

'from supposedly know-it-all development experts in capital cities to supposedly ignorant peasants and slum dwellers who are perceived to need development'

and perhaps even *more* so, because Eritrean fighter culture believes itself to have avoided this trap by having been so recently close to the grassroots. Ironically, the fact of the EPLF's history as a guerrilla force in the field may now be making the rural/urban and literate/non-literate divide even wider and the lack of understanding of indigenous knowledge stronger. As the PFDJ was warned soon after independence, one of the GoE's hardest challenges would be to keep in touch with the grass-roots (e.g. Yohannes quoted in Connell (2002))<sup>75</sup>.

Nevertheless, it is possible to point to other intellectuals and even some government departments which are researching and valuing indigenous culture and knowledge. Cases in point are the work done by the EPLF's Department of Culture on the documenting of traditional laws (see Favali & Pateman, 2003), and various other reports produced by government on topics such as traditional medicine (see for e.g. Teklemichael et.al. 1993). Therefore, it is not that *all* those in authority or with influence are rejecting wholesale the culture of rural people, but rather that the structures in place, as far as broadcasters are concerned, are constraining them from either doing research themselves or taking advantage of this secondary material, and from gaining a full understanding and appreciation for indigenous knowledge and rural needs.

#### **8.2.4. Broadcasters' Social Environment**

Probably the largest effect of broadcasters' social environment derives from them all being urban, educated and middle-class salaried professionals and that they mainly mix with the same type of people as themselves. This, clearly, sets up a situation of cultural remoteness from the rural audience, with various consequences for the content and for broadcasters' image of rural women. For example, the informal feedback they receive is nearly all positive because it tends to come from friends or relatives and thus tends to confirm broadcasters in their established work practices.

A case in point is the use of language register. The findings among rural listeners show that much of the language used in educational broadcasts is inappropriate for them, and, especially in the case of women, may be contributing to a sense of

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<sup>75</sup> Zemret Yohannes was a former fighter with the ELF who also sat on the PFDJ secretariat.

alienation from radio content. This is a classic example of pro-literacy bias, by which broadcasters (and other media professionals), through their use of 'symbols, either written, printed or verbal... imply literacy and numeracy skills on the part of the receivers' (Melkote, 1991), thereby possibly leading to a widening of the 'knowledge gap' (Tichenor, 1970) in society, rather than closing it.

Broadcasters are partly constrained by the fact of wanting to take a pedagogical and modernising approach on the one hand, and at the same time wanting to take a practical approach to help solve rural people's daily problems, on the other. But the tendency is that they are writing not for their assumed audience, but, in fact for their peers – those on their own working team and in their own social circles - demonstrating their qualifications as 'educators' through their 'learned' style and language. It is interesting to note that Abraha was aware of this bias back in 1986:

'does one serve the extremely vocal minority of urban dwellers and ignore the 'silent majority', the overwhelming majority of rural dwellers?...In the Ethiopian broadcasting service we keep asking these questions but we have yet to find an easy solution. We do recognise that our programmes are heavily weighted in favour of the relatively well-educated urban dweller, although we do make conscious efforts to try to serve the needs of the total population. The sad part of this situation is that the most loyal of our listeners are the rural dwellers.' (Abraha, 1986:183)

What is sadder is that Eritrean broadcasters, particularly those in the EMMP, seem to be falling into the same trap as their Ethiopian counterparts. The communication process thus becomes skewed, as the communicators consciously or sub-consciously pay more attention to the immediate pressures of demonstrating what they perceive to be a style proper to education, rather attending to the requirements of their audience.

## **8.2.5. Broadcasters and their respective organisations**

### 8.2.5.i. Interface between ministries

As members of their organisations, broadcasters in Eritrea must reflect the priorities of their respective ministries (the MoI and the MoE) in their broadcasts. For example, at a very basic level, DH is expected to observe ministerial guidelines, such as the 40 percent quota of educative programmes, and EMMP is expected to serve the demands of the Listening Centres by broadcasting at hours which suit the MoE literacy classes, and by producing programmes thought suitable for illiterate rural adults. The consequences of this ministerial divide is that two distinct styles are emerging, with the EMMP pursuing its pedagogical aims via a dry and instructional style, leaving DH to cover educative and developmental topics in a generally lighter fashion.

On the whole, the type of programme style adopted by DH is more likely to attract and interest women listeners than that of the EMMP. On the other hand, the EMMP has certain advantages such as its network of Listening Centres, which (though in many ways imperfect) at least potentially provide the space necessary for women to listen and discuss radio content without the normal distractions of domestic work and home. However, with this Listening Centre structure comes an emphasis on a style deemed to be educational which, as has been argued, is didactic and off-putting. This is a typical case of ministerial demarcations, wherein education for development (overseen by ministries of education) is seen as being something essentially different from information for development (overseen by ministries of information); and therefore the differences persist and become entrenched. It is also an example of Chambers' (1993) 'normal professionalism' concept, in which those who are trained and work in defined disciplines (reflected by specialised government departments) are defensive of their 'patches' and become progressively more conservative in their practice. One of the key weaknesses of professional specialists is that they concentrate on core interests and problems but cannot deal with what Chambers calls the 'last' gaps<sup>76</sup>.

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<sup>76</sup> Chambers' example is the very telling one of the practice of agro-forestry having neither a home within forestry departments (professional forestry is concerned with trees in forests, not fields), nor in agricultural

In the Eritean case, the 'last gap' in question is educational and developmental broadcasting for rural women: it has been divided between two different ministries which each deal with it according to their core expertise. Thus, the MoE, via the EMMP, takes the same approach to radio for women's education as it does to its core interest, which is school-based instruction for children, hence the emphasis on serious learning from radio lectures at Listening Centres. And the MoI, via DH, takes a lighter in tone but nevertheless an essentially paternalistic – arguably a propagandist - stance to educational/developmental output, just as it does to the rest of its output. Consequently, there seems to be little cooperation between the two ministries and their radio stations, which means that there is little coordination over topics covered, and no attempt to ensure that educational and developmental content is broadcast systematically.

#### 8.2.5.ii. Staff issues

Broadcasters do not have security of tenure in their jobs and are relatively badly paid. Furthermore, they do not have incentives or rewards for producing good programmes, but are tacitly expected to derive their own reward from a 'job well-done'. This is very typical of the EPLF/PFDJ ethos which expects all civil servants (even, famously, the President) to have modest demands in terms of pay and working conditions. But for broadcasters, terms and conditions are difficult: for example long hours, no rights to resign or to statutory holidays, and for women broadcasters only one month maternity leave is allowed. Some broadcasters who began their careers with DH in the field, have now given almost twenty years service, but do not feel appropriately rewarded (A.A., 2003). Furthermore, there is also the constant threat of censure, even imprisonment, for some journalists. Although this is more of a risk for news journalists than those working on educational programmes, it means that broadcasters are working in an organisational atmosphere of subtle, but palpable, fear and rumour.

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sciences (just concerned with crops, not trees), nor within animal sciences (just concerned with animals), thereby leaving a 'a major component in the farming systems of hundreds of millions of poor farmers' relegated to low priority and low status (Chambers, 1993).

All these factors impact negatively on the output of educational and developmental messages. They mean that very few programmes can be at all controversial, for fear of censure, or perhaps loss of a precious job. This inevitably results in self-censorship on the part of broadcasters, resulting in unadventurous and non-investigative content, couched in tried and trusted formats.

### **8.2.6. Public Character of Broadcasting**

‘Pressure and constraints caused by the public character of the medium’ was originally included by Maletzke in his 1963 model to take account of the kind of limitations to a broadcaster’s freedom that are typical of a Western context, for example, legal controls and pressures related to public taste which might be controlled by professional bodies or audience watchdog groups. In the Eritrean context, though, the pressures on individual broadcasters and their organisations comes primarily from the ruling party and the fact of state-control.

#### 8.2.6.i. Government control

The GoE is acutely aware of the public character of radio, and its unique ability to reach right across the country and into every community. Senior producers are aware of the political responsibilities which this brings and are conscious of the need to maintain public confidence in both stations, but particularly DH, because of its long-association with the EPLF and now the PFDJ (W.G., 1996).

Perhaps justifiably, the GoE is wary of the free-market and the possibility of opening its airwaves to the forces of commercialism and Westernised media productions which might serve to devalue - even corrupt - Eritrean culture. On the other hand, of course, the GoE is extremely wary of the appropriation of the mass-media by opposition or extremist groups and/or foreign enemies. Part of the argument for a government monopoly is also that it is a temporary measure until the state and the populace have matured sufficiently to allow fuller public debates. However, when this moment will be judged to arrive is now a cause of some cynicism among Eritrean exiles and other commentators (A.A., 2003; Silkin, 2003). To state the obvious,

media freedom would facilitate the free exchange of information, ideas and opinion. This kind of free exchange is needed if any constructive and needs-oriented development is to be achieved at all. If opinion is stifled, if questioning is discouraged, if open debate about local and national issues is forbidden, then it is doubtful if any true development or education can really take place.

An example is the situation pertaining to HIV/AIDS. Journalists have been restricted in what they have been able to report about infection rates in the country; some believe that the GoE refused to admit a problem for a long time, and also that that the Ministry of Health did not have the figures about numbers of people infected, a fact that journalists were not allowed to investigate (A.A., 2003). Clearly, it is difficult to educate a population about the dangers of HIV/AIDS if it is impossible to state what the severity of the potential problem is, for lack of relevant figures, and for want of the freedom to investigate and openly discuss why those figures are not available.

Another consequence of governmental control is a resistance to decentralisation. Though not openly acknowledged by most Eritreans, one of the most serious potential problems in Eritrea - with its nine language groups and its fifty/fifty Muslim-Christian split - is the possibility of ethnic, or regional, conflict and fragmentation (Connell, 2002). In response to this (or perhaps in pre-emptive self-defence), the PFDJ, through the MoI, has resisted the decentralisation of the media, in tacit acknowledgement that allowing regional stations might allow the voicing of regional and ethnic differences. Therefore any proposal for decentralisation of the broadcasting structure is resisted.

However, from the point of view of educational and developmental broadcasting, not being able to respond to local realities is a genuine handicap. If radio is not local, the specific problems of different ecologies, environments, languages, cultures and so on cannot be addressed. The conundrum is this: if the approach is too general broadcasters are in danger of losing the listeners' interest; if it is too local there is the risk of accentuating ethnic divisions (or at least of being accused of doing so). Consequently, the influence of this factor on individual broadcasters remains similar to the previous point: the pressure is to remain unadventurous and maintain a generic neutrality to try to satisfy all ethnicities and all localities. The consequences

for diversity, specificity, and audience-responsive programming are obviously negative.

#### 8.2.6.ii. Standard-setting

Much has been written about the selection and shaping of news by journalists, and the way news can be said to be 'manufactured' to accord with ideological convictions, institutional practices and received ideas, which, in turn contribute to the formation of consensus and the definition of what is normal and what is deviant in a society (Golding, 1981). This concept of journalists as 'gatekeepers' dates back to the 1950s (White, 1950), and Gallagher (1982), amongst others, analyses how professional notions are inculcated into junior producers by seniors in order to maintain an editorial line, and how journalists/broadcasters develop the habit of self-censorship and the skill of knowing how to tackle a sensitive subject, what to leave in and what to edit out.

Therefore, not only overt government control but also an inculcated sense of duty to set public standards lies behind much of broadcasters' daily output, as they write scripts encouraging, for example, military service or, discouraging prostitution. Furthermore, they are aware that they must treat certain issues with sensitivity, and because of the public nature of the medium of radio, there is a certain amount of self-censorship and avoidance of certain subjects. The fact that the EMMP producers feel they must go 'around' the subject of domestic violence is a case in point (K.H., 1996).

In relation to standard-setting on women's roles and the role of the family in society, it can be argued that the way radio is used in Eritrea today is reminiscent of the way radio broadcasts were used in the 1930s in Britain to address women with information on child-care techniques or advice on home management. In the same way that Moores (1993) argues that such programmes reflected an ideological tenet of the time, which was that the welfare of individual bodies and that of the whole 'social body' were explicitly connected, and that mothers became 'the [British] state's delegate' *vis a vis* the family, (Moores, 1993); it is suggested that rural women in Eritrea are regarded by broadcasters in much the same way. They are viewed as

linchpins for reform of the family along healthier, more modern, and more productive lines, for the good of the whole country.

But the corollary of the right to set an agenda is, of course, the responsibility to follow-through on the details of that agenda, and the need to be factually correct in terms of advice given on-air. For instance, if questions from listeners arise as to how to care for chickens without needing to buy expensive drugs, or about the best remedies for swollen ankles during pregnancy (see Chapter 5), broadcasters must consider carefully before broadcasting these questions, because they know their expertise and their technical knowledge is relatively low, their research capacity is limited and therefore that giving responsible answers is difficult. This affects the kind of output and structure of programmes that they attempt and precludes, for example, unfiltered questions from listeners, or any 'live' question and answer programmes. To undertake such programmes would imply both an expert response from central level *and* a much more ground-based understanding of the practical constraints that women (indeed all listeners) are under.

Therefore, as gate-keepers of information and as agenda-setters, Eritrean broadcasters control what gets fed back to them by what they feed in. That is, they ensure that they do not get posed unanswerable questions by their listeners, by keeping the debate controlled, and keeping the agenda focused on advice about self-help and people's own responsibilities, rather than opening up debates and allowing audiences to demand answers, services and rights from the authorities.

### 8.2.6.iii. Constraints from the message

As McQuail and Windahl point out in their explanation of Maletzke's model, communicators are bound to adapt the shaping of the message to the type of content selected (McQuail & Windahl, 1981). Thus in Eritrean broadcasters' case, the decision on how to structure radio output about, say, HIV/AIDS may well differ from programmes about, for instance, how to construct a pit latrine; the former may lend itself more readily to a series of spots or dialogues, perhaps even a multi-format campaign over several months; the latter may seem to require a long one-off talk. For EMMP producers the message must be an educational one, which exerts a

particular pressure on them to find formats and structures which will suit their conception of what education means – which is at base a conception of learners in organised Listening Centres, applying themselves quietly to serious study. For DH producers, the pressure is to make educative messages lighter and more attractive for the general listener (whilst still maintaining a somewhat exhortatory style).

#### 8.2.6.iv. Constraints of the medium itself

Finally, a note needs to be made of the technical and structural limitations of radio in Eritrea. The weakness of the signal, the limitations of the schedule and the fact that radio-sets are not ubiquitous in rural areas are all factors which broadcasters have to take into account when structuring content. For example, repeats are more necessary when audiences are presumed to be sharing sets, only able to afford batteries occasionally, or when the signal is intermittent or weak. But perhaps more importantly, low technical capacity and lack of appropriate equipment limits broadcasters, such that they are not able, for instance, to make outside broadcasts easily, not able to conduct 'live' telephone interviews and are not able to conduct 'phone-in' style programmes. Relatively out-dated editing equipment also affects the production quality of output; for instance it deters broadcasters from attempting finely edited magazine formats. These technical deficiencies in turn affect the extent to which listeners' voices can be aired, and how much access ordinary listeners have to the airwaves. The fact, too, that the whole structure is centralised in Asmara seriously restricts listener access, and limits the extent to which programmes can be made from outlying regions of the country. Again, this has obvious consequences for how locally-relevant programme-making can be.

### **8.3 Conclusions**

In this section some conclusions are reached and some proposals made as to how radio broadcasting of an educational or developmental nature for rural women might be improved in the light of the preceding discussion. The proposals start from the Eritrean case but they have much wider implications and are designed to apply to the rest of Africa.

The models (see Figs. 3 and 5) presented in this and the preceding chapter about the factors influencing the production and reception of educational and developmental radio for rural women could be taken and applied to many, if not all, African countries. It is proposed that the identification of these factors could be useful entry points by which to improve educational and developmental broadcasting by and for women. These proposals are therefore addressed to any policy-makers at national level, as well as NGOs and grass-roots civil society organisations and communicators within the international community who are attempting to reach and involve rural women in education and development through radio in Africa.

Almost all countries in Africa have freed their airwaves to the extent that private, commercial and/or community stations are also allowed alongside the old state-controlled national radios (Deane et. al., 2002). There are now very few countries with quite such a control on broadcasting as Eritrea. But, just like Eritrea, the influence and reach of the national state broadcaster in most African countries is, nonetheless, still enormous. Despite the choice that many Africans now have, the national broadcasters are still the most 'heard' out of all available radio stations (Dean et. al. 2002). This is particularly true for rural people (who still make up the bulk of Africa's total population) who tend to be less well served by community and private/commercial stations and more reliant on the national broadcaster (Skuse, 2003). The state broadcaster still, therefore, has a *prima facie* responsibility for public service broadcasting in the old-fashioned sense of providing a mix of education, information and entertainment for the mass of rural Africans (Okigbo, 1996) . And, despite the pressures to commercialise and to favour music and entertainment-oriented programming which the free-market in radio has recently brought, UNESCO estimates that a significant proportion – 20 percent or more - of Africa countries' airtime is still devoted to educational programmes<sup>77</sup> (Okigbo, 1996)).

The researcher's own observations at national broadcasters like Radio Uganda or the KBC of Kenya shows that many of the factors influencing the output of Eritrean broadcasters also influence these bodies: for example a fear of alienating traditionalists and of challenging patriarchal values; adherence to the modernisation

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<sup>77</sup> Educational programmes are defined as including 'broadcasts for in-school children, adult learners and the general public...also public information campaigns designed to educate listeners...on the concepts and methods of social development' (Okigbo, 1996:155).

paradigm, and a 'magic bullet' view of the power of the mass-media; a social and physical remoteness from the audience; an adherence to centralised structures; and a strong belief in their right to define the best interests of rural people.

To draw a generalised picture, African journalists are predominantly male, urban and middle class, usually with a news or entertainment bias to their training. If they have an interest in educational and developmental broadcasting at all, they have usually been trained to see themselves as guiders of public opinion and to perceive rural people as needing and responding to messages and information campaigns (Mody, 1991). Unlike their rarer cousins, rural and community radio animators, most African national broadcasters tend not to have had exposure to participatory approaches to programme making nor to see their responsibility as facilitators of discussion, rather than as opinion formers (Lyra, 2004).

Furthermore, most African broadcasters, including those working for extension programmes or for educational programmes out of ministries of agriculture or education, tend to have relatively stereotypical views of their female audiences which tend to reflect a traditional image of women as mothers and homemakers. While women's pre-eminent role as mothers should not be denied, a greater acknowledgement of rural African women's multiple productive and social organising roles needs to be better reflected in programming aimed at them (Morna, 2002; Longwe, 2001; Munyakho, 2000).

Moreover, radio broadcasting for education and development should not just be aimed *at* them but should involve them in much more participatory exchanges and debates around issues which concern them, including their democratic and human rights. As my findings show, such programmes cannot elicit interest or uptake if listeners are not able to question, discuss and, to some extent, own the educational content or developmental advice. In the Eritrea case it would require a radical change at all levels for the existing structure, which is basically an information-transmission system to become one which encourages participation, critical thinking and empowerment. Although it is easier in a community or local radio context, it is nevertheless possible to go some way towards participatory programme-making in a state-run and relatively centralised context, as highlighted in the following sections.

### **8.3.1. Knowledge of female audience**

#### 8.3.1.i. Research

In Eritrea, and elsewhere in Africa, there is a need to challenge the prevailing over-reliance on materials from ministries and institute a research culture and a respect for indigenous knowledge involving broadcasters themselves.

Experience from elsewhere shows that some of the problems related to remote travel, particularly for women researchers, are not insurmountable. For example, the BBC radio soap opera *New Home New Life* in Afghanistan employs a permanent group of research staff who travel regularly around the countryside checking facts, picking up themes, pre-testing characters and storylines, and providing a channel for audience feedback and questions to be addressed as the soap opera goes on. Some of these researchers are women and they are operating in a more restrictive gender environment than Eritrea (Adam, 2004).

Another example of a radio project which takes rural women's needs and realities seriously is the AURAT foundation in Pakistan – an NGO which 'collects, generates, repackages and disseminates information for women's empowerment' through radio - amongst other media and methods (Ahmad & Khan, 1994). The broadcasts (which take the form of an educational soap opera and reach about 11 million rural women via the national broadcaster, Radio Pakistan) are based on thorough audience research, specifically on rural women's agricultural priorities: how 'peasant women articulate their relationship with land, water, and forest resources through their daily work' (Ahmad & Khan, 1994).

While the quality of programmes cannot be commented on, AURAT is an example of a relatively centralised broadcasting project for rural women, which nevertheless takes the need to understand and respond to some of their productive realities seriously. Not only did it start by gathering testimonies directly from them (via workshops), but it has apparently found mechanisms for perpetuating a continuous and decentralised communication loop which foregrounds their needs via a network of 500 listening groups regularly visited by the project team. According to Ahmed

and Khan (1994) it is even becoming a vehicle for sensitizing and lobbying government policy about peasant women's needs. As such, it is an example that offers solutions to some of the problems of research and to limitations of the listening centre structure which the Eritrea example poses.

#### 8.3.1.ii. Better audience segmentation

Not only subject-specific research but also a better knowledge of the sub-sections within an audience needs attention. This is particularly true in relation to the female audience, which tends to be bracketed-together *as such*, rather than differentiated in terms of, for example, age, productive occupation, or role within the community. This research shows there is a great deal of difference in the general outlooks of older and younger women, with radio programmes seeming to appeal much more to the latter. Although this view was not voiced directly, it would seem that the attention of the older female audience has been to some extent dismissed by Eritrean broadcasters as hardly worth attracting. But, for example, there may be a case, in Eritrea (and indeed elsewhere in Africa), for special programmes for female heads-of-households, since they are an increasingly common phenomenon, and, in this study showed some enthusiasm for radio. Another group of older women who are particularly influential in terms of health and cultural practices are traditional birth attendants. There may, therefore, be an argument for researching in greater depth the particular factors which either deter older women from listening or, in some cases, attract them. To this end, attention should perhaps be paid both to gender and age-awareness training for broadcasters, and to practices in audience segmentation which have become established practice in the world of advertising and social marketing (see Windahl et al., 1992).

#### 8.3.1.iii. Feedback and feed-forward via listening centres

One of the reasons why listening clubs were set up across Africa back in the 1960s was to try to create an automatic and constant feedback loop from listeners back to broadcasters (see Chapter 2). But if listening clubs are to be more than simply sentinel sites where broadcasters can monitor the impact of their messages, a much

fuller role for the animator/listening club coordinator has to be envisaged. This requires a quite different style of facilitation than that found in the Eritrean Listening Centres.

One alternative model is provided by the Reflect learning circles, which are a relatively new approach to adult literacy and social change<sup>78</sup>. This approach regards learning, specifically literacy-skills, and community-level problem identification as intimately linked (see for e.g. Phnuyal, 1998). Concrete developmental change emerges organically from the learning sessions, from a basis of 'people's critical analysis of their environment' (Archer, 1998). It requires the facilitator also to be a participant in the overall process and to avoid imposing "answers" (Phnuyal, 1998). More fundamentally, it requires that facilitators not only be thoroughly trained, but have a respect for the validity of learners' experience and their right to ask questions and initiate discussion.

Freire (1973) (on whose principles much of Reflect's approach is based) makes this point: that one of the greatest difficulties in his literacy project in Brazil was training good coordinators and 'converting them to dialogue'. In Uganda, the Reflect programme has had to reject some proposed facilitators because 'they were not people who could accept even the basic premise that adult learners (particularly women) were able to contribute to their own learning' (Nandago, 1998). The reasons for this, in Reflect practitioners' experience, is that higher educational levels on the part of would-be facilitators (who are mostly older and male) is often counter-productive, as it produces a 'social distance' between facilitator and participants and perpetuates a formal educational approach, which 'continues to look down on learners as empty-headed individuals who need to be filled with deposits of 'real knowledge'' (Nandago, 1998). This is reminiscent of the animators in Eritrea who are chosen specifically for their previous experience of teaching; and the whole format and conduct of the listening sessions reinforces the status of the animator and the submission of the listeners/learners.

Another alternative to the Eritrean model is the example of group-learning by women in the Development Through Radio (DTR) listening clubs in Southern Africa (as

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<sup>78</sup> Reflect methods have been initiated in various developing countries via local NGOs and CBOs, supported by the British development charity, Action Aid.

outlined in Chapter 2, (see George 1993; Warnock 2001; Matewa 2002). In the DTR model, it requires a sensitive gatekeeping role to be fulfilled by the coordinator/producer as s/he sources relevant authorities to respond to the issues recorded by women listening-group members, and then dub-edits the women DTR members' recordings in, alongside interviews with authorities. Warnock (2001) notes that in Zambia it is often the DTR coordinator/producer's individual enthusiasm and personal contacts among highly-placed officials and ministers which helps make the process work.

It is with this coordinator/producer figure that both the strengths and the weakness of DTR lie: its strength is in that person's skills, experience, enthusiasms and commitment to the participatory principles of the project: its weakness lies in the danger of over-burdening that key individual with responsibilities and workload (Sreberny-Mohammadi, 1996). Furthermore, the DTR model assumes a number of factors are in place: for instance, that once group members have articulated and put forward their service provision needs, that the services exist and can actually be provided by the government or local authorities. This is not always the case in poor and marginalised areas, or especially in war-torn regions where there is effectively no government at all.

However, given the right conditions, both the Reflect and the DTR models (in their different ways) present solutions to the problem of women listeners' need to question, to feed-back and to engage in the learning process, and to feed forward their own information, knowledge and perspectives to the source(s) of educational and developmental material. As such they are much more participatory alternatives to the Eritrean practice. The Reflect circles are designed for participants to learn and practice new literacy skills as well as developing a much more wide-ranging analysis of their developmental problems. The DTR model is perhaps less profoundly empowering than the Reflect approach, but could perhaps more easily be adapted to contexts like Eritrea, particularly because it offers a model that seems to work despite the normal restrictions of government-controlled national broadcasters.

### **8.3.2. Attitudes towards female audience**

A basic premise of the 'rural radio' approach to developmental radio (see Chapter 2) is the necessity for attitude change by rural broadcasters. In order to change, the broadcaster/ animator/ radio teacher must recognise that rural people are 'human beings with individuality and wit, solid common sense and a wealth of practical experience' (Querre, 1992:xviii). But when it is a question of changing attitudes about women as well as about rural people in general, the challenge is doubled. It becomes a matter of transforming attitudes typical of what has been called the MAMU syndrome (Middle Aged Men with University Training) (Mikkelsen, 1995). Employing more women broadcasters would help but, without this pre-requisite of attitude change it is unlikely that training for broadcasters, or research or feedback to them, will make a great deal of difference to the quality of programming for rural women.

Research may help change attitudes, as in Ceesay's (2000:107-108) example from Niger, when audience research was done on women's agricultural patterns and came as a surprise to broadcasters:

[the audience research revealed] there were more female than male stockbreeders. This fact produced disbelief and even anger on the part of the (mostly male) programme-makers who insisted that Niger was still a male-dominated (agri-) culture in which men looked after huge cattle herds on the wide plains of the Sahel.'

Another solution may be gender awareness training which sensitises management and programme makers to gender issues. One example of this is the Commonwealth Broadcasting Association's work in Southern Africa (and other Commonwealth countries), where seminars are run, at radio stations' request, on such topics as the centrality of the role of women in development, the representation of women in the media, media gender language, the role of the media in lobbying for change and the need for equal opportunities policies within stations (DFID, 1999), (see also Morna<sup>b</sup>, 2002).

Broadcasters' initial and in-service trainings should also include exercises in self-reflection and an understanding of the gatekeeping role they play.

These strategies notwithstanding, it may be necessary to question whether the present broadcasters are the right people to run radio. In Eritrea, now the independence war era is over, there may be a case for the paternalistic outlook of the EPLF 'old guard' to be challenged with a completely new set of managers and staff. It is possible to argue similarly in relation to the staffing of the likes of the old broadcasting corporations of other African countries, all of which are the kinds of structures in which the predominantly male staff hark back to colonial times, and which have, in many cases found it difficult to compete with younger and more gender-balanced personnel at newer urban FM stations (Deane et al., 2002; Wanyeki, 2000).

### **8.3.3. Appeal of programmes**

#### 8.3.3.i. Messages or self-expression?

In Chapter 2 a distinction is drawn between radio approaches which foreground message-sending and those that are more about self-expression for individuals or communities. But both methods are valid if a balance can be achieved. Radio that attracts rural women need neither be limited to the 'science of producing effective messages' (Hein in Quarmyne, 1991, nor be exclusively about using radio as a catalyst or a forum for rural women to engage in participatory debates and to 'make their voice heard' (Panos Institute, 2000). Adjustments can be made to both approaches so they are not mutually exclusive: there is a role for messages *and* self-expression in meaningful educational and developmental radio.

#### 8.3.3.ii. Attractive Formats

It almost goes without saying that message-oriented and factual programmes need to abandon the tedious lecture-style formats that dominate most educational slots at present, not just at the EMMP in Eritrea, but elsewhere in Africa. For this, magazine-style formats and programmes based on listeners' questions are probably better. The other obvious reform needed is carefully to avoid the use of technical language, foreign (e.g. English) words, Latin names, and complicated syntaxes. The use of monologues by experts, such as doctors or agronomists, should be abandoned, and

their use must be limited to shorter excerpts or interviews, which are interpreted and questioned by the main presenter; not forgetting that there is always going to be a need for the application of basic principles of variety, simplicity, brevity, appropriate language, use of engaging and entertaining music, drama, vox-pop, and so on. All these kinds of presentational issues are addressed in manuals and guides such as (Adam & Harford, 1998; de Fossard, 1997; Hubley, 1993; Thomas, 2001; Zeitlyn, 1992) and in training courses run by both international and African institutions<sup>79</sup>. Repeats seem to be popular with women, particularly on educational and developmental subjects, since they say they can grasp the subject matter better (see Chapter 5). In the same vein, broadcasters could pay more attention to summarising the main points of educational programmes, in order to help retention of messages. Techniques used in some 'enter-educate' serials include musical couplets at the end of each drama episode to emphasise the main message, or a question or competition posed by the presenter about the contents of the programme (see Myers, 2002).

### *Drama*

The findings show that rural Eritrean women are interested in entertainment, drama and music. Experience elsewhere suggests that entertaining formats, especially plays and serial dramas are particularly good at attracting and keeping women's attention (see Chapter 7). Producing more on-air drama would probably be easier than most broadcasters realise. Certainly, extra resources are needed to pay actors, to create sound effects and to produce a polished and edited end-product. But the time spent by one producer in preparing, say, two weekly lectures could be better spent producing one educational drama, which could be repeated several times.

Still on the subject of drama, to run at least one good quality educational soap opera should be possible by most state broadcasters. Experience from elsewhere demonstrates that the educational, social and development impact of such dramas is worth the extra investment. The example of Radio Tanzania's successful sustaining of the *Twende Na Wakati* soap opera, on topics of family planning and reproductive health, provides a positive example of how it may be done by an African state

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<sup>79</sup> The Communications Initiative website and its e-mail magazine Drumbeat provide updated listings of a wide variety of courses trainings and conferences, the world over (see [www.comminit.com](http://www.comminit.com))

broadcaster (see Myers, 2002). Although long-running pro-social serials dramas can be expensive (up to \$400,000 (US) per year in some cases), an example from Burundi illustrates that a good one can be produced for about \$50,000 (US) per year (Myers, 2002). While this may seem costly in relation to the minimal budgets typical of African broadcasters, what is probably required is a reallocation of existing resources. Where broadcasters are already trying to write and produce as many dramas and dialogues as they can (as in Eritrea), these are occasional efforts, requiring actors and technicians to be found each time, and for the broadcasters to spend valuable time devising new scenarios and researching new topics for every one-off drama. If a regular, long-running serial were in place, actors could be made permanently available, the technical production would become routine and streamlined by dint of a weekly cycle. The production process could be made more efficient with some broadcasters allocated to research, others to writing, others to directing, instead of the situation, which often prevails, where all broadcasters do all aspects of production for their individual specialist topics.

Ideally, the subjects treated in such dramas and discussion/talk programmes should be based on ongoing grass-roots research and dialogue with listeners. In Eritrea, as with many other countries (e.g. DRC, Burkina Faso, Malawi etc.) existing listening clubs could provide a basic mechanism for grass-roots-based formative research. Listening clubs/groups can be forums through which researchers can consult with rural audiences - about what subjects they would like discussed in dramas, how they respond to the topics treated, and what further clarifications and issues they might want further expounded. Serials can be the 'hook' that draw audiences in, and then subjects could be treated in more depth in magazine-type programmes or question and answer slots. Factual radio magazines and 'agony-aunt' type programmes which accompany dramas like *Urunana* (Rwanda), *Tembea Na Majira* (Kenya), *Rruga me Pisha* (Albania) have been shown to be popular with audiences (Myers, 2002). The 'para-social interaction' (Bandura, 1977) which audiences may experience through identification with soap characters can thus be put into practice through the practical advice given in these follow-up programmes.

*'Flowing' programming*

It is interesting to note that back in the 1980s, the Ethiopian broadcasting authorities had recognised that less formal formats were better at engaging the audience's attention. Abraha states:

'On Saturday afternoons and on Sundays, we have what we call flowing structure programming where the host producer is on continuous contact with the audience and has more or less complete freedom on the line-up of the various topics presented. Our experience from [this] is that audience interest and participation is best achieved when the tone and general approach...is less formal and more intimate' (Abraha, 1986:184)

While it is not known exactly what the content of this 'flowing' programming was, it was obviously popular, and therefore it seems unfortunate that it was not adopted by educational/developmental broadcasters in Eritrea. However, it sounds similar to a format that seems to be on the increase in other parts of Africa, namely the 'talk show'. Talk-shows involve free-ranging studio discussion, phone-ins, political interviews, and interviews with celebrities, combined with music, (Deane J et al., 2002) and have been described by Wanyeki as a 'reinvention of the African oral tradition' (Wanyeki, 2000). It is basically a format for political debate, but it can be adapted to discussion about, for example, controversial health topics like HIV/AIDS or developmental issues like women's rights. As such it is a relatively inexpensive yet attractive format which offers an alternative to the dry instructional lecture.

Another element of good broadcasting from rural women's point of view would seem to be the foregrounding of rural women's own voices on-air. But right across Africa the voices of ordinary, rural women are markedly lacking from the air-waves (Spears & Seydegart, 2001). Whereas on community radio it is relatively easy for any members of the community to record their contributions on-air, at present there are technical barriers to this at centralised state-run structures (like Eritrea), such as lack of outdoor broadcasting equipment, and lack of telephone lines and appropriate studio equipment to organise 'phone-ins'. The DTR model in southern Africa has also found a way of putting women's voices on-air through their system of using tape-recorded discussion direct from listening groups. Moreover, with the growth of mobile telephony throughout Africa as well as the availability of digital recording and

editing equipment, programme formats which include more rural voices may well become technically easier, less expensive, and more common in the near future<sup>80</sup>.

### **8.3.4. Policy Commitment to radio by and for rural women**

The Eritrea case shows that rural women have special concentration and access problems, and these are known by broadcasters but are not consciously addressed, despite the commitment by the both radio stations to women's issues and to improving women's access to education. While it must not be forgotten that radio cannot be used in isolation, the following section looks briefly at some of the areas which would need investment, in Eritrea and elsewhere, if commitment to rural women's educational and development via radio is to be meaningful.

#### 8.3.4.i. Training

Perhaps the most obvious area for investment is training. But what is good-practice in broadcaster training? First, it is important to define who is being trained for what purpose. One of the most common confusions when it comes to radio in developing countries is between news journalists and development broadcasters. Adam (2004), among others (e.g. Dagon, 2001), makes the point that there is a need to define a new professionalism among the latter, who should be recognised as very different from reporters in their aims, methods and values:

‘A much less adversarial approach is needed than in traditional journalism, which relies in interviews, for example, in tripping up interviewees, getting them to utter some indiscretion, or at least challenging what is being said.’  
(Adam, 2004)

Probably the first institution to recognise this particular breed of broadcaster was the CIERRO (Centre Interafrican pour l'Enseignement en Radio Rurale de Ouagadougou) in Burkina Faso, which was set up in the 1970s to train rural radio

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<sup>80</sup> A recent report from the Panos Institute (Panos, 2004:33) shows that mobile telephones are on the rise almost everywhere in Africa, but warns that 'rural telephony risks slipping off the global policy agenda.'

journalists (or *animateurs*), who were at the time all from state-run radios. It remains the only centre that offers long-term training for development broadcasters in Africa. However, with the explosion of community radio, training in development journalism is considered more necessary and has become more mainstream and now many other institutes offer similar, though shorter courses. There are also some other good quality on-line courses on offer<sup>81</sup> but they cannot offer the very necessary field-work and practical experience of working and living with rural audiences. It is this immersion in the rural milieu which should make a development broadcaster so distinct from his or her counterparts in journalism.

This said, it is important in the training of development broadcasters not to completely remould the profession and to forget some of the basic tenets of mainstream news journalism. At their best, these tenets are about probing and calling those in authority to account, about fostering debate and ultimately about raising political consciousness. Development broadcasters should not content themselves with simply offering a chance for rural people to have a turn at the microphone; they must, themselves, be trained and get experience in being rural investigators and champions of rural issues.

Formal training is not the only way to improve quality and responsiveness of programming. Learning from the experience and example of others is also extremely important. Therefore not only exposure to other countries' methods, but the introduction of competition would no doubt have a profound effect. Experience from elsewhere in Africa has shown that deregulation and the advent of new, energetic, FM stations in urban areas has in some cases galvanised the national state radio into more creative programming (Deane J et al., 2002)<sup>82</sup>.

#### 8.3.4.ii. Review of Listening Centre policy

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<sup>81</sup> eg. Multi-Media Toolkit 'Producing Content for Radio' produced by a consortium of communication organisations such as UNESCO and One World Radio at [www.itrainonline.org/itrainonline/mmtk/radiocontent.shtml](http://www.itrainonline.org/itrainonline/mmtk/radiocontent.shtml)

<sup>82</sup> In the light of the introduction of Radio Zara, the new FM radio station in Eritrea (see update on Eritrea in Appendices), which is reportedly run by a woman, it will be interesting to note any change of practice by DH or EMMP which this new competition will inevitably bring.

There are many shortcomings to the way Listening Centres are set up and run in the present Eritrean situation, therefore it is probably not worth expanding the Eritrean Listening Centre network only to achieve more of the same lack-lustre results. However, rural women in Eritrea and elsewhere in Africa, do need space away from men, from their domestic workloads and from their household environments if they are to pursue any kind of educational purpose – be it broadcast-based, or otherwise, and, as has been demonstrated by the DTR and AURAT examples, listening centres can act as places at which women can find increased self-confidence, empowerment and practical solutions to their developmental needs. Although these outcomes can be achieved without the radio broadcasting element (cf. the Reflect circles), what radio can do is add value by adding rural women's voices to the mainstream<sup>83</sup> media, thus publicising some of the more hidden, under-valued or invisible aspects of women's productive and reproductive lives.

The essential principles in reviewing policy on women's listening centres in Africa must be a positive commitment to investment, taking into account all the requirements of good-practice (for example employing women animators), and observing the same principles as in other areas of participatory community development, namely thorough research of the context first, and avoidance of the creation or imposition of structures which do not build on existing women's organisations (see for e.g. Hamilton & Cunningham, 1989).

#### 8.3.4 iii. Heightening listening literacy

The point has been made that one of the barriers to rural Eritrean women regarding educational and developmental radio programmes in a positive light is their own lack of intellectual self-confidence and their self image as not-the-sort-of-people that the radio is designed for. There are gender and age-related reasons for this which have been highlighted. However, it is also interesting to note that help with listening skills and 'listening literacy' has been mooted by a number of researchers and practitioners. For example, Usman (2001), in her short study of Fulbe nomadic women learning by radio, notes that the National Commission for Nomadic Education (Nigeria) had begun to offer workshops for the women on listening skills and

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<sup>83</sup> Sreberny-Mohammadi (1996) has aptly dubbed the mainstream media, the 'malestream media.'

implementation of the radio information in their lives. De Fossard (1994) advises classes in listening literacy to accompany distance learning modules. Matewa (2002) documents how some women members of Radio Listening Cubs in Zimbabwe are taught by the ZBC<sup>84</sup> project coordinators how to operate the radio set and to record themselves on audio-cassette, thereby demystifying the technology and challenging the perception that media is an exclusively male domain.

There may be a more widespread need for familiarising rural women and girls with radio. This familiarisation might take various angles. For example, guidance could be given on basic technical knowledge (how the set works, how to maintain it), and the conceptual side (who and where broadcasters are, how programmes are put together and how sound reaches the listener) as well as guidance as to the kind of language register to expect and how (if at all) radio producers can be contacted with questions, comments or clarifications. Furthermore, deeper aspects of media education could be covered, for example, issues of ownership and control of the media, of bias, balance and persuasion, and of representations of different groups in society. (See following chapter for a suggestion for further research in this area).

#### 8.3.4.iv. Decentralisation and investment in regional stations

In the Eritrea case the potential advantages of decentralisation of broadcasting have been discussed, as have the reasons why it has so far been resisted. In such contexts there is little to be done apart from perhaps to wait until internal pressures take their course, and until such a time as government media monopolies become untenable in the face of a world of increasingly internationalised media, where satellites and the Internet transcend national borders.

Moreover, this is not the place to discuss all the advantages and pitfalls of decentralisation for state broadcasters in Africa<sup>85</sup>, but only to point out that regional or local radio stations are likely to be of more benefit to rural women because of all the advantages of operating in local language(s), of being ecologically and culturally specific and being physically more accessible and therefore open to direct access by

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<sup>84</sup> Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation's (ZBC) Development Through Radio Project (DTRP) is part of the family of DTR projects in Southern Africa.

<sup>85</sup> For various angles on state, local and community broadcasting in Africa, particularly the *radio rurale* approach to regionalising state-radio, see Fardon and Furniss (eds.) 2000.

women whose mobility is usually more limited than men's. In this respect it is sometimes possible for state-run radio, by regionalising its service, to approximate to the kind of service offered to women by community radio. The *radio rurale* networks, pioneered in Burkina Faso offer a workable model, although one which has always suffered from underfunding and from being in the shadow of its 'mother radio' in the capital city (Nombré, 2000). Although there does not seem to have been a systematic study of the extent to which regionalised state-run radio has benefitted or involved women, it is difficult to envisage how a centralised structure can have advantages over a decentralised one from rural women's point of view.

#### 8.3.4.v. Improving access to radio

One of the conclusions implied by this research is that it must not be assumed that radio will reach the least educated, the poorest and most marginalised women in rural areas, because it probably will not. The economic barrier to radio listening remains the biggest single obstacle. So, although it may seem obvious, it is worth pointing out that physical access to radio needs to be improved in rural Africa. Distribution of free radio sets has been attempted in some areas of Africa and in other parts of the world; usually in humanitarian emergency situations. Recently this has involved the distribution of wind-up sets (DFID, 2002:34). But these initiatives have had mixed results, since free distribution creates its own problems of fairness, difficulties in preventing re-sale, problems with post-distribution servicing of sets and so on. Wind-up radios have their own technical problems, as well as being much less readily available and much more expensive than ordinary battery-operated sets (Myers, 1998a). They are also inappropriate for the DTR-type listening groups because they have no facility to record or to playback a tape (Matewa, 2002).

Instead of targeted and free distribution of radio sets, probably the most pragmatic way of increasing the number of radio sets in rural areas is for states to firstly implement a number of strategic economic measures such as subsidising the cost of batteries and lowering import duties for audio-visual equipment, thereby producing lower prices in the market-place, and secondly trusting to the gradual expansion of radio set ownership on the back of the spread of electrification into rural areas.

Finally, but most importantly, the most urgent priority is to ensure that radio is worth listening to, which means improving the quality and quantity of output. It is worth noting that in some areas of rural Africa which acquire a new community radio station, private ownership of radio-sets increases markedly (see the example of Mali in Myers (2000) where radio ownership increased by 140 percent in the local area), showing that the public will sometimes only think it worth the investment in a radio set if they have something to listen to which they trust, is in their own language and is addressing local concerns.

## **Chapter 9: Concluding Comments**

### **9.1. The contribution of this study**

This study has gathered evidence about how radio is, and is not, catering for rural women's developmental interests and educational needs, and has analysed the influences, motivations, pressures and constraints for broadcasters. This case-study of Eritrea has therefore helped to address some of the gaps identified in the literature. Its conclusions are that educational and developmental radio for rural women can be improved if certain key factors are understood and attention is paid to them. These key factors relate mainly to the conditions that need to pertain in the socio-cultural surroundings of both listeners and broadcasters, in order for radio to be meaningful for rural women; and the thesis has proposed pointers for communication planners about how to allow for and/or address these conditions in relation to both broadcasters and listeners.

It is possible to argue that the standard focus within development communications and, to some extent within educational broadcasting, has been primarily on the audience and its reactions to, take-up, and adoption (or not) of educational and developmental content. By contrast, there has not been a great deal of analysis done of the circumstances, pressures and constraints that broadcasters are under in delivering that content. In this regard, this thesis has helped to redress the balance.

There remain, however, various areas that would still merit further research, some specific ideas for which are given below (see section 9.3). We probably still need more case-studies elsewhere in Africa to help build-up a more complete picture of rural women's reception and consumption of radio across the continent. But we especially need analyses, from elsewhere, about broadcasters working with rural audiences, particularly with a view to understanding their socio-cultural surroundings

and the pressures and constraints which affect the extent to which they can prioritise and address the needs of rural women listeners.

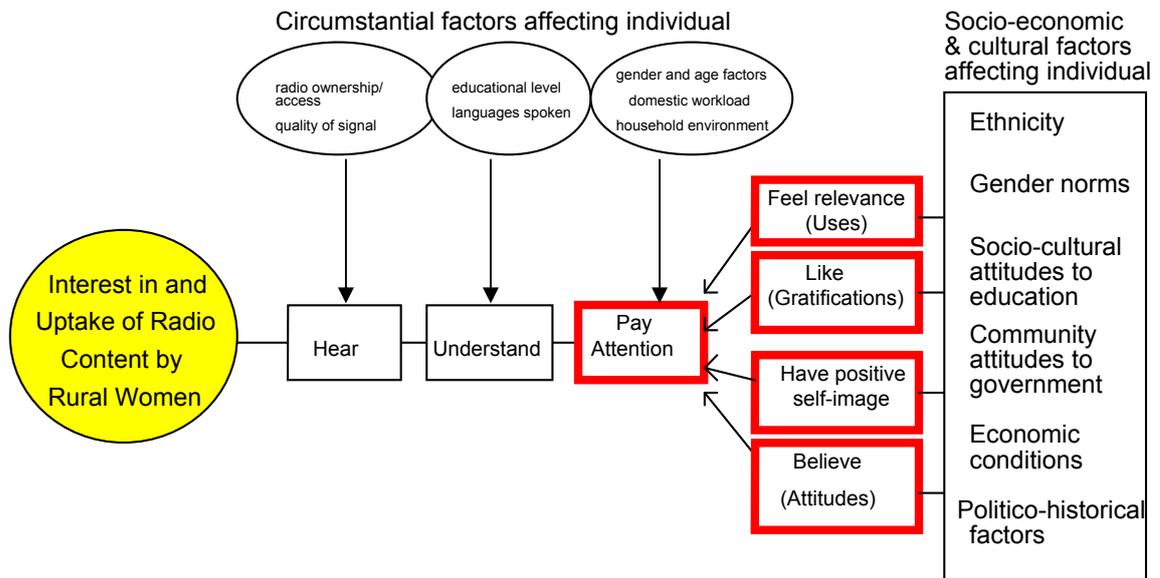
## **9.2. Wider application for models**

In some ways, the subject of the present research has been relatively narrow; it has focused on a particular audience (rural women) for a particular type of subject matter (educational and developmental programmes) conveyed over a particular type of medium (state-controlled radio) in a small (and often overlooked) African country. However, not only has it been suggested that many of the lessons and recommendations to which the research points may be applied to similar broadcasting situations in other African countries, but it is suggested that the models presented may have application in other media contexts.

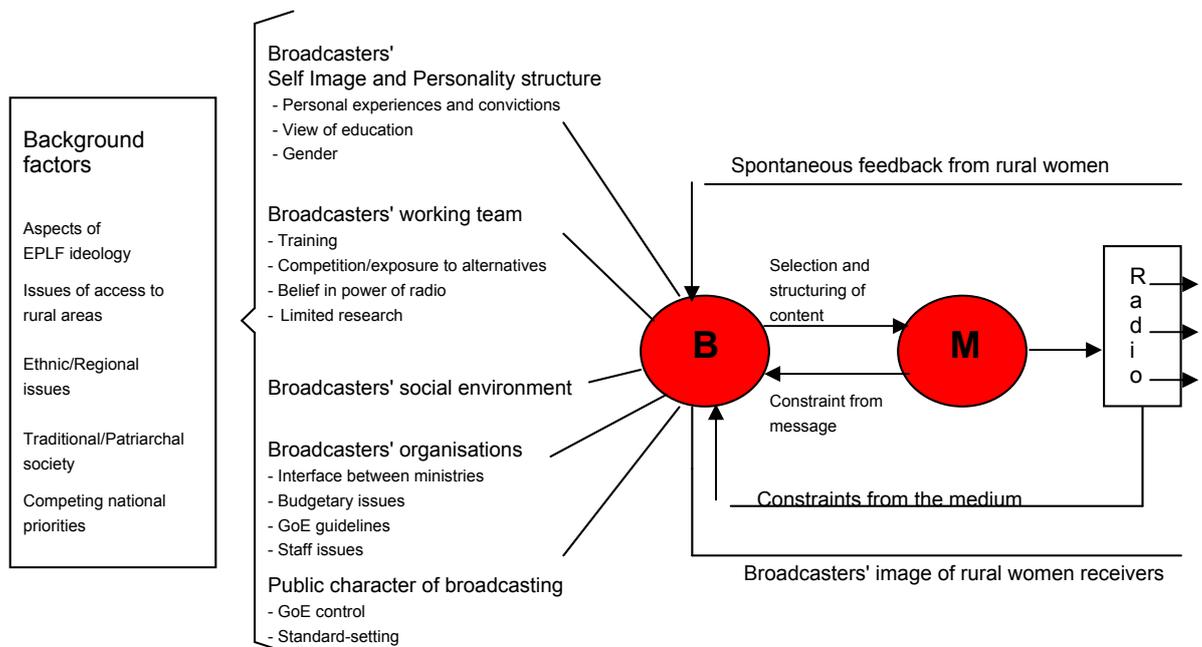
The two key models (reproduced, once more, and seen together overleaf) look at the determinants of interest in and uptake of radio programmes by rural women (Fig. 3) and the factors influencing the production of educational and developmental programmes for rural women (Fig. 5). Both have elements in them which are specific to Eritrea, but they could hold good in other broadcasting scenarios without a great deal of adaptation.

For instance, the model for the receiver-side (Fig. 3) could quite readily be applied to a community radio context, with some small adjustments to the background factors to reflect the particular context, and might, perhaps, be used as a diagnostic tool for examining or evaluating women's interest in and uptake of community radio content. Likewise, the communicator's model (Fig. 5) might be adapted to help understand, or to identify fertile entry points for improving how content is selected and structured for other purposes and audiences than for rural women. For example, it could be used to look at the ways state broadcasters might approach conflict/peace issues in a particular country: in this case, some of the key factors would change to, for instance, 'broadcasters' image of warring parties,' and a broadcasters' own ethnicity or personal experience of the conflict might play more than his or her gender. The communicator's model could also be adapted to apply to other population groups who for cultural, ethnic or historical reasons may be marginalised or disadvantaged.

**Fig. 3: Determinants of Interest in and Uptake of Radio Content by Rural Women in Eritrea**



**Fig. 5: Factors influencing the production of educational and developmental programmes for rural women**



B = Eritrean Broadcaster M = Message (Education and Developmental Programmes for Rural Women)

Similarly, both models would hold good if other media were being considered (Maletzke's model was, after all, designed to apply to all mass media) as a means for reaching and involving rural women in education and development: for instance, taken together, the two models might easily be adapted to television, video or even print media aimed at rural women.

Furthermore, the first model (Fig. 3) could also be adapted to inform our understanding of how rural women might respond to some of the newer ICTs, for instance the use of the Internet through, for example, a rural telecentre. There is currently much interest in development circles as to how rural people in developing countries, including women, can be enabled to take part in, and take advantage of, new ICTs, particularly the Internet (see for e.g. Balit, 1999; Marker, McNamara, & Wallace, 2002; Rathgeber & Adera, 2000). Much of the discussion seems to focus on issues of access, cost and ease of use, but arguably not enough consideration is given to content. By contrast, this receiver-side model shows how the individual woman will be motivated (or not) to approach the Internet. As with radio, what motivates her will initially depend on very practical considerations like cost, her understanding of the language used, and, importantly, her level of education (especially literacy); but then it will be the relevance and the attractiveness of the contents, as well as her individual attitude towards the reliability of that content and her self-confidence in relation to the technology itself which will determine her interest and uptake of that content. And, again, all these determinants will be influenced by background factors such as gender norms and economic conditions. Thus, it is proposed that the model in Figure 3 be used as a possible starting point for the consideration of rural women's interest in and uptake of content carried by other ICTs than radio.

### 9.3. Other research possibilities

The research in Eritrea suggests at least four possibilities for further research regarding radio.

#### 9.3.1. Broadcasting Policy

This research has discerned some 'fertile entry points' and some 'pointers' for communication planners *vis à vis* educational and developmental broadcasting for rural women. Further research is thereby suggested into what structures and policies need to be in place for such recommendations to be implemented. The present study was focussed on a one-country case-study, but it would be interesting to compliment this case-study with a wider analysis of broadcasting policy in other developing countries. The aim of this would be to identify existing policy, training and organisational models which already favour the kind of radio output that elicits women's interest, and the kind of participatory involvement which seems necessary if radio is to contribute to meaningful education and development for women, and to draw lessons from them.

Several existing alternatives have already been mentioned, which function within the state broadcasting apparatus, namely the DTR initiatives in southern Africa, the *radio rurale* approach in West Africa, and other examples. Some literature on them has been referred to. As one evaluation of DTR-type broadcasting in Malawi has pointed out, here, 'both producers and facilitators have made the difficult transition from news-based to needs based programming' (Chalimba et al., 2002:10). But what is required to sustain this kind of transition? For instance, the same evaluation points out that the successes of the special Development Broadcasting Unit (DBU) which runs the DTR groups, within the Malawian Broadcasting Corporation (MBC), are difficult to sustain without donor support, and that skills transfer between the DBU and the mainstream MBC has not taken place. *Radio rurale* also has its sustainability and other organisational problems (see Ahmad & Khan, 1994; Ilboudo, 2001; Nombéré, 2000). It is arguably damaging for the main state broadcaster to be separated from the service for rural people and/or from the service for distance education. However, in some cases, such as in Kenya, the fact that the rural broadcasting structure (AIC – Agricultural Information Centre) has historically been

separate from the national broadcaster (KBC), and has survived through donor rather than government support, perhaps means that it has been able to remain detached from the corruption, cronyism and generally low broadcast standards that have characterised the KBC until recently (Lloyd-Morgan, 2002).

It was beyond the scope of the present research to investigate such problems and alternatives more deeply. This, in effect, could be the focus of the proposed follow-on research; asking two inter-linked questions: Which national public broadcasting structures in developing countries offer the most promising models in terms of radio for rural women, and why? And are radio initiatives that work for rural women necessarily destined always to be designed and funded from the outside, or have/can ways been/be found by national public broadcasters to build and sustain them themselves?

### **9.3.2. Women's day-to-day listening**

The second research subject has been referred to briefly in the discussion about women listeners (Chapter 7). It was found that news, songs and dramas are the programmes Eritrean rural women pay most attention to. There were limits to the present study, however, which meant that it was not possible to look in detail at anything other than educational and developmental content. It would be of interest to do a more long-term ethnographic reception study of the day-to-day listening that Eritrean women do, and to try to isolate and analyse some of the covert and implicit 'messages' that are woven into this audio back-drop of news, music and variety. An ethnographic approach is suggested because it seems to offer one of the more fertile strategies for evaluation of the mass-media in a sector where precise impact is notoriously difficult to measure (see for e.g. Tacchi, Slater, & Lewis, 2003). Furthermore, the research might combine an ethnographic approach with a gender focus, and might look in particular at the portrayal of women and girls on the radio and ask questions about how the issue of women's representation is being tackled. The present research has only briefly touched on this, and has not taken an overtly feminist stance, but questions remain, for instance:

- As 50 percent of the population, do women and girls enjoy 50 percent of the airtime? If not, why not?

- How are women portrayed compared with men? Does their representation conform to the kind of analysis put forward by, for example, Van Zoonen (1995), namely, women as passive, emotional, dependent, submissive, and so on, in contrast to men as active, rational, independent, and resolute?
- And what sort of ideological messages (both overt and subtle) does the constant day-to-day diet of songs, dramas, news, and variety carry and mean for women?
- What sort of changes, if any, can be discerned as a result of this output, in terms of women and girls' outlook, behaviour, attitudes and position in Eritrean society?

### **9.3.3. Woman-headed-households**

A third subject, also referred to briefly, is the area of female-headed-households, and their use of the radio. This might be an Africa-wide study, or possibly one designed to compare and contrast several developing countries on different continents.

Statistics show that female-headed-households are on the increase everywhere, due to a variety of factors including male out-migration, wars, the impact of HIV/AIDS, and women's greater longevity. The present study seems to indicate that where women are heads of their household in rural Eritrea, they have more control over the radio set (if they have one), and possibly rely on it more than women whose husbands are present, partly because of a greater need to keep in touch with the outside world. The researcher has also observed that elsewhere in Africa where women have moved into some of the traditional preserves of men, such as the growing and marketing of cash-crops, or trading, they start buying radio sets and start adopting the same behaviour with radio listening as is typical of men and boys, namely listening in public places, carrying it with them to market, and so on. On the other hand, it is also observable that women-headed-households are often among the poorer households in a community, and may, in fact, be even more isolated and excluded from the outside world because of not being able to afford radios.

Furthermore, because they have perhaps greater work-burdens (having, in the words of one Eritrean woman head-of-household, 'the responsibilities of both husband and wife,') they may have even less time to listen to the radio. Nevertheless, the whole may be a fertile area of investigation, and a hypothesis might be formulated and tested along the following lines: that women, when they move into men's traditional

economic and household spheres adopt similar radio listening habits to men, meaning increased usage and attention.

#### **9.3.4. Media Literacy for Rural Women**

Finally, an area worth investigating is the question of what rural African women's needs are in terms of media literacy. As has been suggested, one of the possible ways of eliciting greater interest and uptake of educational and developmental radio is to help women obtain the conceptual and practical tools that would help them approach radio-listening with more self-confidence and a more positive self-image as 'someone who understands the radio'. However, there has been little research or experience in this area. Media education is not a subject traditionally taught in schools in Africa, and critical capacity among audiences (who have, to date, not had a great deal of media choice) is, understandably, low. But, given that media choice is expanding throughout Africa, with the growth in private and local radio, as well as gradual growth and penetration of other electronic media into rural areas, it is arguable that the development of people's critical capacities should be developed in parallel. And to this end, there may be a special case for favouring women and girls, since they will no doubt continue to be disadvantaged in terms of formal education for some time to come, and will therefore remain a group who will be obtaining much of their information and education about the world beyond their immediate environment from the mass-media. Furthermore, there may be a case, as Bown (1985, 1990) and Archer and Costello (1990) have argued, for literacy to start with the empowerment of learners and that, in rural, oral societies there are other, sometimes more important 'literacies' than that of the written word. In this view, literacy is seen as women's ability to express their own needs and desires using whatever techniques are most relevant to them, be that by means of the alphabet, orality or by means of television, radio or video.

Some research questions might therefore include the following:

- Do rural women want and need to be taught how to listen critically, or does this just happen automatically, the more radio (or other media) they are exposed to?
- Is there a case for informal media education that not only raises media awareness but also teaches and encourages participation in the media, as

presenters, or discussants (for example in community radio contexts)? If so, what are girls/women's needs in this regard?

- Could some kind of media-awareness or media-literacy element of the curriculum be developed and delivered at the same time as conventional literacy?
- Should it be taught in schools? Does it lend itself to a curriculum at all?

#### **9.4. A final pointer for donors**

All too often, projects in development-support-communications or IEC initiatives, involving radio, are designed by aid donors and NGOs in the expectation that national broadcasting structures are equipped to adopt and sustain them. Unfortunately, this is often not the case, especially when aid finance comes to an end. Alternatively, when faced with the fossilised structures of state-broadcasting, donors and NGOs will bypass them where possible, and will either support community and commercial stations, or will help set up new radio stations or separate production units which use the state-broadcaster only as a vehicle for transmission. The flaw in this latter strategy is, of course, the long-standing problem of sustaining these separate structures in the long-term.

This thesis has underlined the systemic problems in the state broadcasting structure of Eritrea and has drawn attention to the way these, and similar ideological, cultural and societal factors also prevail in the national radios of other African countries. Nevertheless, these stations remain the most prevalent and far-reaching of means to reach rural populations in Africa, and cannot be abandoned. They also tend to employ some of the most experienced broadcasters on the continent. Perhaps the way ahead involves adjusting donor policy to harness some of the energy and latent capacity that endures within public broadcasting structures.

# Appendices

## Appendix 1

### Radio in Eritrea: Timings and Frequencies (1996)

#### 1. Dimtsi Haffash

Broadcasting on 945 KH Medium Wave and 7020 KH Short Wave and 5000 KH Short Wave

Monday – Friday:

Time	Content	Languages
6.30am-9am (MW)	News, Music, Info & Ed.	Kunama, Tigrinia & Tigre
6.30am-9am (SW)	News, Music, Info & Ed.	Afar and Arabic
12.30-2.30pm(MW)	News, Music, Info and Ed.	All 5 languages
5.30pm-9am (MW)	News, Music, Info and Ed.	All 5 languages

Saturday:

as above with additional Youth Programme from 3.30pm-4.30pm

Sundays:

as above but morning programmes start 1 hour later.

## 2. Adult Education (EMMP)

Broadcasting on 1089KH Medium Wave

### **Tigrinia:**

	Tuesday	Thursday	Sunday
Mornings			
8am-8.30am	Agriculture	Health	Civics
8.30am-9am	Civics	Agriculture	Health
Evenings			
5pm-5.30pm	Health	Civics	Agriculture
5.30pm-6pm	Agriculture	Health	Civics

### **Tigre:**

	Monday	Wednesday	Friday
Mornings			
9am-9.30am	Agriculture	Health	Agriculture
9.30am-10am	Health	Agriculture	Health
Evenings			
5pm-5.30pm	Health	Agriculture	Agriculture
5.30-6pm	Agriculture	Health	Health

Each week a new programme for each topic is produced. In Tigrinia each programme is repeated four times in one week; in Tigre each programme is repeated six times. The Tigrinia and Tigre programme content are usually different – ie. they are not simply a translation of each other.

## Appendix 2

### An update on Eritrea

#### *Recent developments pertaining to educational and developmental radio*

Despite a still struggling economy, a return to war with Ethiopia and a continuing humanitarian crisis in several parts of the country, since 1996 Eritrea managed to make some investment in the educational and broadcasting sectors. According to the GoE, expenditure on education as a percentage of total government expenditure increased from 4.2 percent in 1993 to 9.2 percent in 1997, this being 4 percent of GNP. (Ministry of Education<sup>c</sup>, 1999):11). In 2002, the Adult Education Department of the MoE was awarded a UNESCO prize for promoting adult literacy, particularly among women and demobilised soldiers (OCAH/IRIN, 2002). Furthermore, the reach of radio seems to have increased, no doubt reflecting a modest increase in numbers of households owning radios, and possibly due to the MoE's efforts to establish rural libraries and reading rooms equipped with radios: the MoE quotes radio reaching 40 percent of the total population in 1995 and then reaching 75 percent of the population by 1997 (Ministry of Education<sup>c</sup>, 1999)<sup>86</sup>.

By 1997, *Dimsti Haffash* had increased its developmental remit 'focusing on information and functional content related to better living' (Ministry of Education<sup>c</sup>, 1999) from 40 to 50 percent of its output. Last year (2003), the Mol announced that *Dimtsi Haffash* had commenced broadcasting via satellite, in 11 languages (Tigrinia, Tigre, Kunama, Hidareb, Nara, Arabic, Saho, Afar, Bilen, Oromo and Amharic) reaching North Africa, the Middle East and southern Europe (Ministry of Information Eritrea, 2003). DH continues to be run from the Ministry of Information.

The EMMP saw a modest expansion during the 1990s. The MoE states that by 1997 there were 96 listening centres and 'more than 340 radio sets [had been distributed] to adult listeners' (Ministry of Education<sup>c</sup>, 1999:6) - presumably for group listening. If

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<sup>86</sup> The figure for 1995 is based on the Eritrean Demographic Household Survey and the 1997 figures are from the Ministry of Information: but the comparison over time may not be wholly reliable, as the two surveys may not be methodologically comparable.

these centres are functioning effectively, then this is a great improvement on the twenty that were actually functional in 1995. The MoE has grand plans for expansion, saying that it plans to strengthen the adult education programme by establishing 4,000 listening centres throughout the country and expanding the service by three additional national languages; however, no date is given for these particular targets.

There have been some government-sponsored initiatives to boost radio access across the board, such as the provision of wind-up (Baygen) radios in some areas to schools and Listening Centres, and technical work to improve the broadcast signal from Asmara. There are also signs that with the provision of better electrification in some areas (the GoE secured a large loan to boost rural electrification in 1997 (Ministry of Education<sup>c</sup>, 1999)) and with modest economic growth, alongside the, again modest but nevertheless tangible, return of refugees, this is likely to increase the amount of consumer goods like radio sets throughout the country. The MoE has continued its push for adult literacy, though it admits that take-up of literacy classes for women is still low at only 4% of the illiterate adult population and the completion rate is 'only 70% of those enrolled' (Ministry of Education<sup>c</sup>, 1999).

One potentially important development is the start of a new radio station, Radio Zara, which is an FM station aimed at a youth listenership, broadcasting in Tigrinia and Arabic. Although it is still state-run, the fact that it has been allowed to start at all and to be a possible competitor with *Dimtsi Haffash* signifies a certain amount of relaxation of control on the GoE's part. However, being an FM station means that it is designed mainly for the urban youth market, and not for the rural areas.

There is also a clandestine radio station called 'Voice of the Eritrean People' which broadcasts once a week in Tigrinia on Shortwave from Norway. This seems to have been started by Eritrean exiles from a branch of the outlawed ELF. It is not known how many people this reaches, though it is meant to cover the whole of the Middle East and Horn area (Clandestine Radio Watch, 2004). There are other opposition initiatives among the Eritrean diaspora, mainly operating through the Internet. At least one of these has a 'radio station' which streams audio via the Internet, again, mainly for a diaspora listenership.

Despite these changes, policies in broadcasting have not altered a great deal since when the field work was done between 1995 and 1996. Much remains the same: the GoE is still firmly in control of the mass-media; radio is still the country's pre-eminent medium; *Dimsti Haffash* is still the dominant channel and the EMMP continues to be run out of the Adult Education Division of the Department of Technical and Vocational Education of the MoE.

### *Political developments*

Although multi-party elections were promised by 1997 (and then postponed again until 2001), elections have not been held to date (2004), and the PFDJ, under President Isaias Afewerki, remains in power.

There have been some dissenting voices among outside observers as well as opposition from inside Eritrea. Journalists and political opponents have gone into exile or have been imprisoned, and Eritrea's human rights record has been criticised and several of the promised reforms have not materialised (IRIN<sup>b</sup>, 2004; Pool, 2001; Silkin, 2003). In terms of civil society, very few organisations are allowed to function beyond those controlled by the government and the activities of indigenous NGOs have been curtailed (Pool, 2001). This contributes to there being few channels for dissenting views within Eritrea, and, from ordinary rural people's point of view, few sources of developmental aid, advice, information or education which are non-governmental.

The late 1990s have once more been characterised by war, first with Yemen over sovereignty of the Hanish Islands in the Red Sea in 1996, and then, much more devastatingly, with Ethiopia once again. Ostensibly sparked by a border skirmish around the town of Badme, this second war with Ethiopia began in 1998 and was partially resolved under UN negotiated peace-agreement in 2000. The roots of this most recent conflict may be traced back to long-standing rivalries between the EPLF and the TPLF and to questions over Ethiopian access to the Eritrean ports of Massawa and Assab and unequal trade terms (Negash & Tronvoll, 2000). Resources once more had to be diverted to the war effort, thousands of men and women were called up for military service and once again, tens of thousands were

killed and hundreds of thousands of citizens were displaced or forced to flee across borders (UN-OCHA IRIN, 2003).

Partly as a consequence of these conflicts, and partly due to suspicion of extreme Islamic elements based in the Sudan (which date back to internal struggles between the EPLF and ELF in the 1970s (MRG, 1997)), Eritrea finds itself surrounded by what it views as enemy nations (Ethiopia, Sudan and Yemen), and has used the argument of 'preserving its territorial security and national unity' to justify some of the repressive domestic measures it has recently taken, (OCHA IRIN, 2003) as well as its high expenditure on defence (SIDA, 2002).

The most recent conflict is also acknowledged as having delayed – arguably, even diverted attention from - the many urgent social and economic tasks faced by Afewerki's government<sup>87</sup>. Demobilisation and repatriation of refugees from Sudan is still not completed (as at 2004, 200,000 Eritreans remain in Sudan (IRIN, 2004)), the introduction of political parties has been delayed, as has the full implementation of the constitution (OCHA IRIN, 2003). Meanwhile, due mainly to war and drought, the humanitarian situation is still grave and poverty is still severe: the UN estimates that 'about two-thirds of the population live below the poverty line' and in some remote regions such as Gash Barka and Northern Red Sea malnutrition among mothers is as high as 40 percent (IRIN, 2004).

### *Consequences for the Media*

The GoE has not yet delivered on its stated commitment to a free press and broadcasting structure, as stated in its Constitution. Radio and TV still remain firmly in government hands, and the written press, after a brief flowering of independence in the mid 1990s, is now back under strict state control. In this respect, Eritrea is now ranked with Zimbabwe as the worst violator of Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human rights in Africa, and has been described by media rights campaigners as 'a living hell for the media' (IRIN<sup>b</sup>, 2004).

Observers critical of the present-day regime in Eritrea note that public trust in DH has declined noticeably during the 1990s, especially during and after the beginning of the

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<sup>87</sup> (World Bank Group March 2003 *The World Bank Group Countries:Eritrea* [www.worldbank.org/afr/er2.htm](http://www.worldbank.org/afr/er2.htm) ).

border war with Ethiopia in 1998 (A.A., 2003; Silkin, 2003). Eritrean exiles (particularly those in the United States and Western Europe) are even more outspoken, and have recently become vocal about issues of governance in Eritrea on the Internet . The following is one example of the strength of feeling about the lack of a free press:

‘The minister of information has gone on record to state that in Eritrea freedom of expression exists. He was unable to demonstrate diversity of opinion in the State radio, State TV, State newspaper, so now we are calling on him to start anew and show it on the State website...We would like to see an article or two or three...that are critical of government policy. Since its inauguration, the Peeker [a nickname for the Ministry of Information website, *Shabaif*] has published 40 articles and reportages: 100% of them reflect government and pro-government thinking. Where is the freedom of expression?’ (Awate.com, 2003)

However, there is also evidence that DH played (and continues to play) an important role in terms of mental support for ordinary civilian Eritreans during war-time. Almedom’s recent research in displaced persons camps during the 1998-2000 war with Ethiopia, found that people have been kept informed about events outside their camp through the national radio and through regular meetings convened by the administrators. ‘Most participants believed that a sense of being in touch with their own community and the country as a whole protected them from *Chinquet* (mental oppression) *Hasab* (thinking too much) and *Ihita* (sighing)’ (Almedom 2003)

## Appendix 3

### Questionnaires from Methodology Chapter 4

#### Survey A: Questionnaire (41 women in 4 case-study villages: Awlietseru, Kuandaba, Gahtelay and Bashari)

Random sample from households with a radio

Village:

Age category of woman:

1. Have you listened to the radio today/when was the last time?
2. What did you listen to (subject-wise) the last time you listened?
3. What channel and language was it?
4. Is this what you normally listen to? What else, if anything?
5. How often do you listen? every day/every 2-3 days/not more than once a week/not more than 2 or 3 times per month/less frequently than that?
6. What days of the week and what times of day do you tend to listen?
7. What is your favourite subject/what would you like to hear more of?
8. Have you ever listened to the Adult Education (EMMP) channel? Irregularly/Regularly?
9. What do you remember from the Adult Education channel?
10. Who bought the radio? Who buys the batteries?
11. If batteries were cheaper, would you listen more?
12. Can you work the radio? (show us)
13. Have you ever heard any health or agriculture information on the radio? If so, what information?
14. Who in your household listens most? Do any women from outside the household listen to your set? How regularly?

## Survey B: House-to-house survey in 4 case-study villages

(ie. all 656 households in the four case-study villages of Awlietseru, Kuandaba, Gahtelay and Bashari)

- One sheet for each household
- Record household number

Questions:

1. Does this household have a radio? (Yes/No) If no move to next house.
  2. Does the radio work at present? (Yes/No) If no move to question 2a. If yes move to question 2a: What is the cause? (a: it's broken b: no batteries at present)
  3. Does any member of the household (present or not present) listen regularly to the Adult Education (EMMP) channel? (Yes/No/Don't know) (If yes ask question 3.a., if no or don't know move on)
  - 3a. How many in the household listen regularly to Adult Education (EMMP)? (Record number and for each one, record sex (male/female) and age-group (child/young/middle aged/old).
- Thanks and move to next house.

## Survey C

(A random survey following a radio campaign on tree enclosures and breast-feeding in 1996, of 72 men and 36 women in 12 highland villages: Afelba, Aba, Khe Khor and Awlietseru in former Akaleguzai province; Adi Kotayo, Adi Baro, Daro Kuna'a and Adi Logo in former Serai province; Zibangehb, Shimangus Lalai, Mbeito and Tsahaflam in former Hamesein province)

Tree enclosures:

1. What do you understand by tree enclosures?
2. Do you think you are/will be allowed to cut and carry grass for your animals from the tree enclosure?
3. What is your opinion of tree enclosures?
4. How have you heard about tree enclosures? If you have heard about them on the radio, what do you remember about the programme(s)?

Breastfeeding:

1. How long after the birth do you/should you start breast-feeding? Why do you/should you?
2. Do you/should you give any other foods before you start breast feeding?
3. Do you/should you give the baby the first milk (colostrum)? Why or why not?
4. At what age do you/should you start giving solid food?
5. If you have heard breast-feeding advice on the radio, what do you remember?

## Appendix 4

### Case-study village profiles

The following is a brief profile of each of the case-study villages.

**Awlietseru** is a large village (317 households) in the former province of Akele Guzai, near the relatively major town of Decamhare, with many urban migrants and some modern housing. It is ten minutes walk from the main road with bus services north to Asmara and south towards Ethiopia. It has a primary school and a clinic, though the latter is not functioning at present. The school also functions as an adult literacy centre, which, until shortly before my visit, ran educational radio listening classes for women. About 80 adults are thought to be literate of whom about 15 are women. Three small shops exist within the village for daily necessities, but the weekly market is located in Decamhare (about two hours walk away). There are two orthodox churches. The village is not electrified and has no piped water. Sanitation facilities are rudimentary - probably in line with the national average (ie. about 1 percent of households having pit latrines (ref. UNICEF 1994)).

The village economy is largely based on subsistence barley and te'ef growing on the adjacent hillsides with some animal rearing and migrant labour to Decamhare and Asmara. Support in terms of remittances from family members overseas - in Europe and the United States - is significant, though the exact extent of this is not known. An initial estimate of the number of radio-owning households was about half. This was later confirmed by my own survey.

In terms of recent history Awlietseru was located in the occupied as opposed to the liberated zone during the 30 year war of liberation. The village records 240 martyrs to the struggle and more than 10 killed by the Dergue within the village. The 1970s and 1980s are remembered as particularly hard years of famine and drought,

bombardments and looting by the Dergue.

**Kuandaba** is a small highland village in the former province of Hamesien, about 32 km north of Asmara, and is reached along a stony track negotiable by four-wheel-drive vehicles. The population of 240 households is about average for highland Tigrinia villages. Most of the housing is of the traditional highland style ('Hidmo') made of wood and earth. There is a small primary school for children up to 5th grade but no literacy classes. Like Awlietseru, literacy rates stand at roughly the national average (about 20% for men and 10% for women). There is no clinic or health worker in the village. There is one orthodox church and two small shops.

Subsistence agriculture is based on barley, te'ef and wheat and some rearing of small stock. Eggs, tomatoes and onions are produced mainly for market and to a small extent for home consumption; chicken and eggs being women's affair. Like most communities in Eritrea, Kuandaba is not self-sufficient in terms of food. Figures for Eritrea as a whole show that roughly 80% of the population is dependent at some time in the year on food aid.

The initial estimate for numbers of radio-owning households was only twenty-two: 'those who have children abroad'. My own survey later showed that this was nearer to a hundred, or almost half of households.

The recent history of Kuandaba is, like almost all villages in Eritrea, one of war and hardship. Briefly controlled by the EPLF in the 1970's, the village was repeatedly subject to carpet-bombing by the Ethiopians. Then, during the 1980's the Dergue set up a Baito in the village which, it is reported, the villagers were forced to attend. Kuandaba lost 70 martyrs to the struggle, of whom eight were women. About 40 fighters returned from the field alive.

**Gahtelay** is a relatively large settlement in the former province of Semhar. It is situated on the main road between Asmara and the port of Massawa at the foot of the escarpment. It is mainly Tigre-speaking, but has a mixed population because of being a trading post and an area receiving Arabic-speaking returnees from Sudan. Because of its semi-nomadic population, Gahtelay is the name both of the settlement and of a relatively large area of agricultural land and pasture along the foot of the escarpment. There are officially 280 households of whom between one third to a half move away on a seasonal basis. There is a primary school and a ten-bed clinic, a mosque and provincial government buildings, including a police post. Tea-shops, restaurants and an informal market line the road.

The settlement is the site of rainy season agricultural activity when maize, sorghum and water melon are grown. For the rest of the year many families follow their herds of goats, sheep and some cattle and camels to the grazing areas. Those remaining at the settlement engage mainly in trade (consumer goods and firewood) both legally and (probably) illegally. Initial estimates by the Baito-head of radio -ownership were high, but my survey showed that only about 36 per cent of households owned a set.

The history of the settlement is again one of significant upheaval due to war. Initially settled in the early 1970s for agriculture and trading, it was twice burned down and destroyed, with the population scattering across the neighbouring countryside and away to Sudan, Saudi Arabia and even to Germany as refugees. Since 1991 the village has been expanding, with new houses being built and traders being attracted to its strategic position on the road. Recently it has been the site of some anti-government discontent, with security problems in the surrounding countryside.

**Bashari** is a small Tigre village about 15 km from the town of Keren in the former province of Senhit. It has 139 households, or about 790 people. The settlement is made up of rainy season permanent housing on a ridge of hills and dry season

temporary housing on the land below. It has a small mosque and koranic school but no state school or clinic. It depends on the neighbouring administrative post of Sotur for services and a market.

The economy is based on sorghum growing and animal rearing, with some market gardening near the Anseba river. Trading is conducted by men in Keren. Radio ownership is relatively low compared to the other case-study villages at an estimated 28% of households.

Bashari's recent history is, again, one of suffering and violence. The village was apparently burned down seven times by the Dergue between 1967 and 1990, with only a brief spell under the EPLF in 1977-78. Now the village population is expanding once again, with families returning from exile in Sudan. Although the problems associated with war are at an end, problems of locusts, drought and food shortages remain.

Literacy levels in Gahtelay and Bashari, particularly among women, are low, although optimistic estimates were given by the Baito heads. In Bashari the estimate given was 25 percent literacy among women. But having met at least 20 women of different ages from this village, none of whom were able to read or write, I estimate that only about 1 or 2 percent of women are literate.

## Appendix 5

### Radio Scripts:

#### 1. 'Changes in Adolescence' Radio Education Script – Tigre – EMMP

Transcript (translation by W.Z.)

*Human beings from birth to death pass through different stages. The older we get the more the mind develops. Our voices change. Our bodies also change, especially between 13 and 18 years of age. This applies to both girls and boys. The boy's voice changes to that of a man and the girl changes too, and because of the changes, there are some problems.*

*At this stage boys and girls who used to fear their parents refuse to listen to them. Because they want to be independent, they even abuse their parents [literally 'pierce their eyes']. They only think about themselves, they do not care about their elders and do whatever they think is good for themselves. They say things their parents do not like, they dress differently from those around them. They are also very emotional. Because of this they have conflicts with their parents and those around them. They cannot control themselves, but it is not their fault – it is their age.*

*Another cause of problems is if their parents do not look after them properly because they are preoccupied with earning their living and have not got time to pay attention to their teenagers, and do not give advice and exert discipline. Adolescents suffer if they do not get the affection and love they are supposed to get from their parents. Some parents do not know how to take good care and how to educate their children. Some only know how to give birth. So the children just do whatever they want and eventually run into problems.*

*What should we do to take good care of our kids?*

----- MUSIC -----

*What should be done to educate the young?*

*Education should happen first at home and then at school. The first teachers are the parents, and if parents do not do this there are problems. Children are like a small tree which must be cared for. Who are the second parents? It's the school. Here they are taught to be straightened out and they learn what is good and bad.*

*One of the things a teacher will cover is the process of reproduction. A girl has 6 million eggs in her body and when a male sperm comes into contact with the egg a pregnancy occurs. The breasts and womb are the things which give a girl her characteristics as a woman. The male sperm is also divided into different parts which we cannot see and it has hundred of millions of parts to it. These are always being produced. A man is fertile all his life.*

----- MUSIC -----

*In adolescence the boy changes: the voice and his body shape changes and he starts to grow a beard. The shoulders widen and he grows fast. These things come stage by stage.*

*When a girl matures her voice becomes thin and her body changes: thin in parts and wide in parts; she starts menstruating; puts on weight and her breasts swell.*

*All these changes are between the ages of 13 and 18. There are certain 'spices' in the body which cause these changes. At this stage the teenagers have strong characters and the family needs to intervene and guide and advise them. It's the family's duty to show them the right path, otherwise they will step out of line. This sort of character and behaviour will pass with age.*

## 2. Malaria Script (Tigrinia) – Radio EMMP

Poem:

*Famine mocks and cheats you and diseases make you ill  
So many people have been suffering and have been destroyed by malaria  
Both in their homelands and when they're travelling away from home  
In hot areas, where the traveller's food is barley porridge,  
Malaria can get them anywhere at any time  
It can kill you before your time.*

*Anopheles is a transmitter of malaria  
By you many people's blood is taken  
Many people have got a fever and died because of you  
Their blood has been sucked and they suffer  
Instead of working, studying, or working the land*

*You feed on people's blood to hatch your eggs  
Amongst the algae you hatch them in stagnant water  
From larva to pupa to flying adult in the dirty water  
You transmit the disease from a sick to a normal person  
Oh Anopheles! How many people have you made sick?*

*Malaria are tiny parasites in your body  
They go into your blood and weaken your body and your brain  
Malaria stops all human development  
From now on let's know that malaria is our enemy  
But now it's got to stop  
Let all the masses rise up against it!*

*Instead of going to the doctor, let's prevent it  
Prevention is better than cure  
But if we do get sick we should go to the doctor  
Let's believe in science  
Let's wake up! Let's wake up! Let's wake up!*

**Presenter (Tesfaedit):** You remember our last programme – ‘What is Malaria’? It’s a small microbe which can be eradicated by cleanliness, it kills and attack many people. Today we will ask Doctor Debrezein and Ato Kiros about malaria. When we talk about transmittable diseases we mean a disease which can be passed from person to person. There are different types, such as TB. Then we have other transmitters like mosquitoes and lice, also contaminated water and food. So, in general transmittable diseases are those which go from person to person and they kill. Now we know what transmittable diseases are.

**Ato Kiros:** Malaria passes from person to person by the female Anopheles mosquito. There is no other means of transmitting malaria since mosquitoes feed on blood, so it gives the disease to the next person when it bites them. Malaria is not transmitted by eating together, sleeping together, kissing or drinking together, but it goes from a sick person to a healthy person when the mosquito tries to feed. It’s a tiny disease which can only be seen by a microscope. It is called a parasite.

**Presenter:** Yes, the disease is a parasite which means something which depends on someone else. So, let us explain where the parasite lives.....

**Ato Kiros:** This parasite goes into our blood, to the liver and attacks the red blood cells there, and then the person get sick.

----- MUSIC -----

**Presenter:** Yes, malaria is produced in the liver. But first, let’s ask Dr. Kiros where the mosquito reproduces.

**Ato Kiros:** There are two types of mosquito. One is Anopheles, the other is Culex. The female Anopheles carries it but the female Culex does not. However, both mosquitos feed on human blood and they reproduce in places like ponds, reservoirs, wells, in tins around the house, in old tyres. One mosquito can hatch 150 to 300 eggs and each egg becomes a mosquito in 8 days. It takes 2 days to become a larva and 2 to become a pupa and 4 to be a full-grown mosquito. So, because the

*water around us is kept standing for more than 8 days it can produce mosquitoes, so we have to keep our water clean, meaning use it before 8 days are up.*

*Presenter: This mosquito, when it bites it goes from blood to liver to blood and attacks the red blood cells. What does a person look like who has got an attack of malaria?*

*At Kiros: The symptoms are fever; shivering, poor appetite, sweating, restlessness, general weakness, vomiting. When a person feels these symptoms he must immediately see a doctor.*

*Presenter: Yes, when someone has an attack of malaria his skin becomes pale, his nails become white, he gets thin. Why is this Dr. Debrezein?*

***Dr. Debrezein:*** *Once the person is attacked the red blood cells are destroyed and so the person becomes thin and pale because of lack of red blood corpuscles. If a person has a good number of red blood cells he looks all right, but when the red blood cells are destroyed he becomes anaemic. When more and more red blood cells are destroyed the person gets less oxygen and less haemoglobin and becomes pale.*

***Presenter:*** *Now we have learned that malaria attacks those in rural areas and our masses are working to reconstruct the country. Those who are anti-malaria have to work to destroy it.*

----- MUSIC -----

***Presenter:*** *How do we control malaria?*

***Dr. Debrezein:*** *First you check for the symptoms which are fever, sweating and paleness and you go to a doctor.*

***Presenter:*** *Why go for a cure?*

**Dr. Debrezein:** To prevent suffering and death. Also one should not be a spreader of the disease. So we have to get rid of the water around our houses and clean everything up. To control malaria you need:

One: medication

Two: to gather villagers together to fight the disease

Three: through the guidance of village health officers to clean around the village.

Also as a last resort we can use chemicals, but it's expensive and can pollute. The other protection is individual action. Try to build houses higher than water level.

Doors should be built against the direction of the wind. Also, use a mosquito net.

----- MUSIC -----

Poem (repeated)

----- MUSIC -----

**Presenter:** Now let us hear from Idris Ahmed Ibrahim who is a patient in Ghinda hospital with paralysis of both legs.

**IAI:** I had malaria or hepatitis, so to treat it I took traditional roots and herbs. Then it got worse so then I went to a healer and got cauterised. But then after 2 or 3 times it was done below the navel and I got paralysed in both legs.

**Presenter:** So you had to go to hospital. Do you still get malaria?

**IAI:** Yes, often, all the time.

**Presenter:** So do you think that At Ibrahim was right to go for traditional treatment? Give your answers to the Ministry of Education at the following address etc. etc.

### 3. Radio Script 'Harmful traditional practices'

Radio script (Tigrinia) broadcast 28 October 1996 on Dimtsi Haffash

(Prepared by Haregu Keleta, translated by Khadija Naib: translator's notes in brackets).

*'If you go up the hill towards May Abashaul, [a small area in Asmara], and, you ask the directions towards Father Nuru's place, everybody's response is: "Oh! Is it the man who performs uvulectomy? ...Just pass the mosque and turn around."*

*Although his name is Siraj Mohammed Nuru, when it comes to mentioning his name or the man who performs uvulectomy, male and female circumcision etc, he is addressed by his surname Aboy Nuru, [Father Nuru].*

*Aboy Siraj's house is open from five o'clock in the morning. Every day is quite full of women holding children of different ages coming in and going out. Few are even accompanied by men who watch from a distance.*

*Aboy Siraj started his profession 30 years ago, and due to his long experience with children and their mothers, he is very polite towards them. For instance from the beginning of the operation until the end that usually takes just few minutes, Aboy Siraj does his job jokingly and telling funny tales to divert his clients from noticing the screaming and the pain of their children. Aboy Siraj's instruments are laid on the table as if prepared for sale. We can see a flat piece of wood like a doctor's spatula to press down the tongue and hook shaped pliers. With these instruments Aboy Siraj performs the uvulectomy within few seconds, then he places the uvula on the forehead of child. He doesn't separate the used instruments from the so-called clean one for his next operation, all are mixed up. After that he gives the child a spoonful of fluid which he calls lemonade, while cleaning the child's throat with the - already contaminated - instruments sprinkling halon seeds [shinfaa/rue] around the child. At the end he advises the mother to go on with the breast feeding and give the baby yoghurt, then he wraps the uvula in a piece of paper and asks the mother if she has got oil and onions. When he gets a genuine positive reply, he tells her to fry it and eat*

*it with her husband. The children's age who come for Father Siraj is between one week to one year.*

*On the 16<sup>th</sup> of September at 6.00 o'clock in the morning almost fifty children were gathered ready at Father's Siraj door. Most of them with high temperature, tonsillitis and flu. But the general diagnosis of the parents was uvulitis. For instance an eight-month-old baby boy who came accompanied by his parents was really weak. According to his parents he has stopped feeding days ago, he couldn't even open his eyes properly for at least one second and like everyone else he was subjected to father's Siraj operation.*

*The parents were asked why they didn't go to the hospital instead of coming to this man. 'Doctors, are only good to give drugs but they disapprove of performing uvulectomy. For instance I went to Hazhaz Children's Hospital where I was told that cutting the uvula was wrong. So I left and came to see this man.' These were the words of the angry mother. A second mother came again with a worried look on her face, because after the uvulectomy her son became very sick, and Father Siraj advised her to bring him back. Every-time he thinks that complications might arise, despite the danger he advises them to come to him instead of going to the hospital and seek medical help. At the end of the day, the advice given by him is 'it is nothing, just force the child to eat'.*

*All the procedures are done in an unhygienic condition. Father Siraj performs the uvulectomy in an open place a verandah, but the circumcision is done inside his house. However, the instruments are also unsterile, and if a mother wants her child to be circumcised she has to bring her own pillow. During the operation the child's thighs are tied around the pillow, to cut the extra skin Father Siraj uses a tissue clamp or a forceps and then tells the mother 'Look? I have got a new blade', he opens the new blade from its cover and cuts away the extra skin. The second stage is very quick, he covers the penis with cotton and instructs the mother to put oil on it whenever dries up. The pillow shouldn't be lifted until the wound is healed.*

*That day [early in the morning] five infants, girls and boys came for the usual procedure. One of the mothers brought her two children to be circumcised, one of them was a two week old girl. This particular mother, she didn't even think for a*

*minute what was going to be her daughter's life or future. Concerned about her age, everybody started to whisper and talk. A young lady asked: 'Why are you doing this? You know that the fighters are against it. They didn't circumcise their daughters!' But all the women who were waiting their children's turn started talking against her. One of the mothers said: 'We definitely know the problems a girl could face if she has not been circumcised. They say that first she starts scratching her vulva because of the itching and afterwards she might not be able to control her sexual feelings.'*

*The mother of the two children added that she heard a neighbour who spared her daughter from circumcision failed to prevent the complications. The girl first started to have vaginal itching and afterwards her vagina was full of maggots. Therefore, she became determined to bring her daughter to Father Siraj.*

*Performing female circumcision for Father Siraj it is the easiest thing. He does it without any anaesthetic; he picks up the tip of the clitoris with a forceps and removes it from the root without any regrets. The two week old child couldn't bear the pain, her skin first turned pink and then grey. Her mother was totally in shock and because was hard to hold her child the women around her came and held the poor child. The child body was pressed flat and tight on the stool where she was lying with her legs spread. To facilitate healing he puts a black powder [kohl] used by women as eyeliner, on the wound. At the end the girl's leg are bound together in three places; at the ankles, the knees and around the thighs. After three days each tie is supposed to be loosened up, and she is not allowed to have a bath before one week.*

*The mother at last holding her child started to thank and bless Father Siraj as if he saved her daughter from hell. Then he made a joke as usual 'I hope her husband likes her enough to say 'She is special! I've never seen the like' [meaning her genitalia].*

*Father Siraj doesn't let the mothers leave straight after the procedure, may be scared that bleeding might happen. He cleans the blood and tells the mother not to worry because the wetness present on the cotton is only urine not blood. He charges them from 10-30 Birr, even though there is a big gap between the children's ages.*

*Generally doctors are against uvulectomy and female circumcision. Doctor Michael Mehari, a paediatrician explains that everyday there are cases of uvulitis [infection of the uvula], even those who had uvulectomies come to the hospital for treatment.*

*An ex-fighter told us that his son died after operation due to infection. We asked Dr. Michael about the boy's case and we got a confirmation that was true.*

*Then we asked Father Siraj if there had been any mistakes from his side, he replied 'No one is perfect! Mistakes happen, and this is up to God!' To show us that there was nothing wrong with the profession inherited from his father. AIDS is one of the causes, which is minimizing the world's population, and is spreading as well in our country. Therefore, un-sterile instrument used by Father Siraj are one of the reasons to contract AIDS and HIV, despite whatever he says to justify his deeds. He claims that he knows his instruments very well, and he doesn't have any problems to identify the clean ones from the used ones. But the issue is not identifying it; he uses one forceps or knife for multiple procedures. As revealed previously his instruments are laid on a table, clean and dirty all mixed. We were watching him performing the operation. At one time we even thought that he might have an extra set in a boiler because there weren't clean instruments available anymore. But he kept using the same instruments over and over again; at this point we asked him why he keeps his instruments laid on the table. He said: 'I know all my instruments, even if they get mixed I can easily recognize them.' Father Siraj showed us a boiler full of forceps, knives and razors to prove that he follows a sterile procedure in case somebody might make a legal and medical accusation. But we couldn't get a straight answer why he doesn't keep the so-called sterile instruments in its boiler instead of taking it off and exposing them to un-hygienic conditions. The table where the instruments are laid is not even clean, either the clients put their money on it or there is something else such as the tea-towel.*

*The almost sixty-year-old Father Siraj, who acquired his profession from his grandparents, is still working blessed by everybody. But why is he still practicing his profession with unsterile technique and above all unlawfully? Law also forbids performing female circumcision, so why leave him practicing and allow children to contract AIDS and HIV.*

*Female circumcision is one type of gender inequality, and it has damaging effect on women's physical, social and psychological future life. Complications can arise such as; haemorrhage, urine retention, oedema, fever, infection such as (tetanus). Gynaecological problems like chronic pelvic inflammations, keloid (painful scar formation), pain during menstrual flow and sexual intercourse, sterility, etc... can*

*occur. These are the main complications that occur as stated by medical professionals.*

*But what kind of implications could happen to those who luckily escaped circumcision? With this concern, we actually directed the question to a lady that had got the chance to escape from this terrible harmful practice: 'It is true that an uncircumcised woman is literally called sex maniac?' 'Well I have got a complete body! But those who were subjected to this practice are disabled, and our community is doing it because it is accepted as a custom, a custom that leads to gender repression. As far as I know there are no specific evidences which prove otherwise.' She replied giving examples from hers and other women's experience. To conclude, she made a suggestion that any type of Female Genital Mutilation should be stopped.'*

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