

IAWRT Committee on Rural Women and Media



The International Association of Women in Radio and TV (IAWRT) decided in 2018 to add a new action area to its portfolio of intervention forms in support of its overall mission to *strengthen initiatives towards ensuring women’s views and values are integral part of programming and to advance the impact of women in media*. The new committee will focus on extending the IAWRT mission to women and girls living in rural areas of the global South.

The committee has, as a preliminary working objective to *“amplify rural women’s voices through their innovative use of communication and media for a visible and empowered presence on communication and media platforms, setting their own agenda, fighting for their rights”*.

While the committee works on outlining its longer-term objectives and work areas, it is pleased to accept the invitation to apply for IAWRT International’s approval of the present proposal to access the earmarked FOKUS funding for a pilot project. We look forward to any questions, comments and suggestions that IAWRT International might have to the below project outline.

*On behalf of the members of the
IAWRT Committee on Rural Women and Media*

Birgitte Jallo, Coordinator



Pilot project on:

Rural women setting their own agenda, using social media, fighting for their rights.

Objective:

This first pilot project of the IAWRT committee on Rural Women and Media, plans to use mobile phones and social media platforms to amplify rural women’s voices for a visible and empowered presence, documenting their own agenda, fighting for their rights through voice and visibility.

The pilot project will empower the **‘Blue Light Star Women’s Group’**, a group of rural women in Western Kenya, to enhance their powerful socio-economic local development efforts even more effectively through the use of mobile phones, radio and social media to advance their agenda of development and change.

Participants:

The Blue Light Star Women’s Group, based in Ndivisi village, in Bungoma County of Western Kenya, is a highly respected grassroots group due to their success with Savings and Credit Cooperatives, dairy and poultry projects and recently branching into establishing a common market for all their products to increase income for the participating women by cutting off the middle men (see more detail including history and context in annex).

The IAWRT Kenya chapter will facilitate the process, through coordination, training and any other support needed. Josephine Karani, Chair of the IAWRT Kenya Chapter and Racheal Nakitare, former president of IAWRT International will lead the work (more details below).

Pilot Project: Rural women setting their own agenda, using social media, fighting for their rights.

The digital revolution has changed the way we think, live and work. The world has reached a point where digital literacy is fundamental for finding a job. In future, ninety percent of jobs will demand digital skills. We stand as such on the brink of the fourth technological revolution, which will fundamentally alter the way we live, work, and relate to one another. Because of its scale, scope, and complexity, the transformation will be unlike anything humankind has experienced before. Women need to be on board in these developments – also women and girls in rural areas.

This pilot project takes off from this understanding and is based in rural Kenya, 450 kms from Nairobi. Kenya has made great strides in the area of information and communication technology, but despite progress, IAWRT Kenya's research documents that only 30% women access and use the internet. Therefore, capacity building for women is important in order to make them techno savvy.

The Blue Light Star Women's Group has become a powerful socio-economic development actor, lifting women out of poverty through engagement with savings and credit groups and economic activities like poultry rearing, dairy cattle, honey harvesting and growing sugarcane. This all as a basis to ensure children's access to schooling, better nutrition and access to health services.

IAWRT Kenya has identified this group and its gap in terms of access to and use of media and social communication platforms. This could strengthen their socio-economic activities and action-range through amplification of their voices, including through lobbying the County government on issues that affect the women and children in their community. At the same time, the **Blue Light Star Women's Group** were found to be yearning for a platform to share their success stories, which could inspire others to engage in similar activities for better quality lives.

IAWRT Kenya in partnership with the Committee on Rural Women and Media will equip the group with the skills to engage on both traditional and social media, where the women have the chance to share their success stories with others, and to embrace the use of technology for economic as well as social and political development.

Besides from the immediate usefulness for the Blue Light Star Women's Group, they also see their engagement with this pilot project as a way to begin to be able to access and navigate the E-government services Kenya is making available like applying for passports, driver's license, ID's and so on. How are they able to access all of this if they don't have the requisite knowledge? How will they participate in agitating for their rights if they cannot reach the leaders? This project will give them the voice through radio and social media platforms.

Facilitation:

IAWRT Kenya has been working on empowering women with ICT skills and media engagement. In collaboration with the IAWRT Committee on Rural Women and Media, two IAWRT Kenya members will carry out the training and coordination; they are Ms.Racheal Nakitare and Ms.Josephine Karani.

Time:

The pilot project is considered stage one in a process, which the committee hopes to continue after the end of the existing funding. The pilot process will start July 2018 and end November 2018.

Funding:

Through IAWRT International has earmarked USD 4.000 of its FOKUS funding available for the pilot project. The funds will be used to purchase smartphones with internet access / airtime for the participating women and coverage of travel expenses for local IAWRT (chapter) members who will travel to meet, listen to, inspire and train the rural women.

The funds are foreseen used by November 2018 at which time the accounts with all due documentation for expenses had, will be presented to IAWRT International along the guidelines agreed at the time of receipt of the funds.

The pilot project – way forward:

2018

- July** IAWRT Kenya facilitators visit Ndivisi to discuss the project, the activities and time plans as well as the purchase of Smart phones, internet access
- August** IAWRT Kenya facilitators train the women in Ndivisi
- September** The Blue Light Star Women’s Group work with the recording of stories and other production
- October** Work continues with IAWRT Kenya facilitators monitoring and support by phone.
- November** The pilot project concludes with documentation of results and evaluation, extracting Lessons learnt and recommendations for onward work post-pilot phase. Narrative and Financial reports are prepared for IAWRT International along agreed outlines.

The pilot project – budget:

Budget Area	Budget items	(KES) Price per unit / Pax	Units / Pax/trips	KES	USD
Communication	Smart phones	10,000	10	100,000	1,000
	Internet bundles/ Airtime	5,000	10 pax X 5 Months	250,000	2,500
Mobilization	Transport costs (Facilitation)	Transport costs (Facilitation)	\$200 X 3 trips	60,000	600
Coordination, training	IAWRT-K Chapter members to undertake.	-	-	-	-
Total Project				410,000	4,100

ANNEXES:

**The Blue Light Star
Women's Group**

**The IAWRT Kenya
Facilitators - bios**

Blue Light Star Women's Group of Ndivisi, Webuye, Kenya

History and objective of the group – why was it formed and what does it do now?

A group of primary school teachers came together in 1997 and identified the challenges they were facing as professionals at the grassroots, especially their inability to support needy children from the community. This came out of the realization that many of the children especially girls were dropping out of school due to lack of fees and other basic requirements. Most of those unable to pay fees (both boys and girls) were orphans. It pained them that children with so much potential missed out on this singular opportunity (education) that could transform their lives.

They started by contributing for one child then realized the numbers were soaring. That forced them to re-evaluate their own financial ability before committing to sponsoring the needy children hence the engagement in table banking activities. Table banking is a group funding strategy where members of a particular group meet once every month, place their savings, loan repayments and other contributions on the **table** then borrow immediately either as long term or short-term loans to one or a number of interested members. The monies are borrowed and repaid at a minimal interest of 10 percent for short- term borrowing (monthly) and 12 percent for long- term borrowing (6-12 months). This revolving fund of members borrowing and repaying with interest is continuous and at the end of the year, there are dividends paid to the group members depending on one's shares.

The money helps the members improve their businesses and income-generating activities, including stocking their kitchens, and are able to feed their families and communities. The **Blue Light Star Women's Group** later invested in school fees for their families and have now grown over the years to embrace economic activities like poultry rearing, dairy cattle, honey harvesting and growing sugarcane.

They have initiated poultry projects for all the **Blue Light Star Women's Group** members in order to identify common market for their produce as well as benefit from Bungoma County government sponsored trainings on agriculture. Some have taken off while others are undergoing training and induction. (There are forty-seven Counties in Kenya under the devolution arrangement of government alongside the National government.)

The women in the Blue Light Star Women's Group have become role models in the community, sharing their stories, inspiring and mentoring other women especially the younger ones. They have found strength in their numbers and have been identifying issues affecting women with the view of championing through advocacy and policy formulation at the County level.

Who are members in the group?

The group started off with ten (10) members but the membership has grown to twenty five (25) to date, but it is expanding by the day. They range from 28 to 65 years of age. They are all teachers (some retired) who can communicate well in English, Kiswahili and the local Luhya dialect. The initiatives and visible outputs of their projects have attracted four male teachers who have applied to be considered for membership. They argue that the group does not meet the constitutional requirement of gender equality. (Membership list has been requested from group – expected soon.)

What are some results of the group so far – in line with why it was formed and its objectives?

Each of the members has greatly benefitted from their table banking which focused on lending school fees for the families. This has been a worthy investment for the members of the **Blue Light Star Women's Group** and the results are visible.

In 2003, the Blue Light Star Women's Group lobbied the government to provide bursaries for the orphans and a programme was put in place though it fizzled out with the change in administration.

The programme to support orphans ended and the pilot project will through case studies document it, and who benefitted will share their stories. Besides, our proposed project will give the **Blue Light Star Women's Group** the platform to begin to engage with the administration again and lobby for support for vulnerable children.

The group has a savings plan that acts as a Savings and Credit Cooperative Organization (SACCO), where they can borrow money for emergency cases and repay with little interest.

The dairy and poultry projects by each of the members are a huge success. They are now working on establishing a common market for all their products since this will give them better bargaining power and cut off the middle men.

This project comes in timely to provide the required platform for advocacy, lobbying and engaging with the County leadership as well as using the mobile phones for economic empowerment.

Why is the group interested in joining this pilot project?

Kenya has made great strides in the area of information and communication technology (as mentioned above), but despite this progress, IAWRT's research on how women access and use the internet remains at 30%. Therefore, capacity building for women is important in order to make them techno savvy. We have identified the gap in the group who are equally yearning for a platform to share their success stories but also use their numbers to lobby the County government on issues that affect the women and children in their community.

While IAWRT equips the group with the skills to engage on both traditional and social media, the women have the chance to share their success stories with others, and to embrace the use of technology for economic as well as social and political development. How will they access and navigate the E-government services like applying for passports, driver's license, ID's and so on if they don't have the requisite knowledge? How will they participate in agitating for their rights if they can not reach the leaders?

This project will give them the voice through radio and social media platforms.

How does the objective of the project match the general mandate and objective of the group?

They both focus on women empowerment of women to influence decisions that affect them and the children in communities. These are women that the people at the grassroots will identify with. They are respected hence will have a following and support. They can identify with them because they have lived amongst them and they trust them.

How does the group (and facilitator) foresee the organisation and individual steps in the process?

This is an eye opener that broadens the scope of the group and gives them the platform they have been yearning for. Their skills on engaging the political leadership and holding them accountable will be greatly enhanced hence work towards tangible results.

The IAWRT facilitators will start with training the whole group but identify a **pilot group of ten women cutting across the different age groups** for the first five months.

Results from the pilot phase will give us the opportunity to also broaden the project to include other chapters or areas. The project is practical since it will require continuous engagement and evaluation of the process as it progresses. We will eventually grow to include the rest of the group based on the findings of the pilot. Sharing across different countries and continents will further enhance it.

Who will facilitate the work?

IAWRT has been working on empowering women with ICT skills and media engagement. Two IAWRT Kenya members will carry out the training; they are Ms.Racheal Nakitare and Ms.Josephine Karani.

Ms. Josephine Kerubo Karani

- A seasoned broadcast journalist of close to 3 decades, (Television Production/Presentation).
- Holder of a Diploma in Television Production (Kenya Institute of Mass Communication), Bachelor of Arts (Sociology and Communication), Pursuing Masters in Communication (both from the University of Nairobi).
- Holder of numerous certificates of media, communication and related fields from various institutions at home and abroad.
- Produced programmes of various genres in television, radio and online platforms. Interested in the area of children, youth and women issues especially their rights and development.
- Currently the Technical Manager, Broadcasting Unit in -charge of Editorial, Radio and Television Broadcasting of the Bi-cameral Parliament of Kenya.
- Member of the IAWRT International and Chairperson, IAWRT- Kenya Chapter, for the second term

Racheal Irene Nakitare

Racheal Nakitare, is the Acting Television Programmes Manager with Kenya Broadcasting Corporation and former President of the International Association of Women in Radio and Television. She has vast experience in media spanning over 30 years. She holds a Masters in Communication, as well as various professional trainings which include the prestigious Huber Humphrey fellowship. She is passionate about gender equality and women empowerment: Most recently she widely engaged in research to establish women's rights on-line, gender mainstreaming in the media as well as trained women leaders on ICTs and media literacy. She sits on the Gender mainstreaming committee of KBC, Advisory board of Orione Community center and the representative of African on the Ethical Journalism Network.