
**BRIDGING INFORMATION AND ACTION: FAITH-BASED ORGANIZATIONS'
COMMUNITY INFORMATION STRATEGY FOR FOOD SECURITY AND SOCIAL
TRANSFORMATION IN ISIOLO COUNTY, KENYA**

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the influence of Faith-Based Organizations' (FBOs) community information strategy on food security and social transformation in Isiolo County, Kenya. A concurrent mixed-methods design was used, combining a structured questionnaire administered to 36 leaders and community representatives drawn from thirteen qualifying FBOs with focus group discussions and key informant interviews. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and Pearson product-moment correlation; qualitative data were analyzed thematically. Communication systems were largely inadequate: 80.6% of respondents reported that FBOs do not use diverse communication channels, and 69.4% reported weak community support for, and weak adoption of, effective communication strategies, though 63.9% acknowledged reasonable responsiveness. Information-related variables nonetheless correlated very strongly with broader community engagement and social outcomes, with coefficients ranging from 0.8651 to 0.9671. Information therefore functions as a foundational, enabling process rather than an isolated communication activity. Findings are bounded to FBOs with an explicit food security mandate operating for at least ten years in one ASAL county, and the modest sample limits sub-group analysis. FBOs should diversify communication channels beyond community meetings and local radio, particularly toward mobile-based platforms, and institutionalize feedback loops to strengthen dialogical, two-way communication with communities.

Keywords: *Community information strategy: Communication: Faith-based organizations: Food security: Social transformation*

1. Introduction

Food insecurity remains a persistent development challenge across Kenya's arid and semi-arid lands (ASALs), where recurrent drought, weak infrastructure, and constrained livelihoods intersect to undermine household and community wellbeing. Faith-Based Organizations (FBOs) have increasingly positioned themselves as non-state actors mediating between communities and formal development structures in such contexts, and community engagement, structured through information-sharing, consultation, involvement, collaboration, and empowerment, is widely regarded as essential to strengthening participatory development and sustainable food security. Among these strategies, community information strategy occupies a foundational position: it is through timely, accessible, and responsive communication that communities become aware of food security risks, understand available interventions, and are equipped to participate meaningfully in decisions that affect their livelihoods.

Community information strategy plays a critical role in enhancing food security and social transformation by facilitating timely communication, knowledge sharing, responsiveness, and informed decision-making among development stakeholders. Effective information systems strengthen trust, improve community awareness, enhance adaptive capacity, and enable local communities to respond proactively to food security challenges arising from climatic, socio-economic, and institutional changes (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations et al., 2024). Within participatory development, access to relevant and context-specific information is increasingly recognized as a prerequisite for meaningful community participation and sustainable food systems because it enables communities to make informed decisions and actively engage in development processes rather than remaining passive recipients of external interventions (High Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition [HLPE-FSN], 2024).

Recent empirical studies consistently acknowledge the importance of information and knowledge systems in addressing food insecurity, although they differ in their analytical focus. Toromade et al. (2024) demonstrate that climate change continues to undermine agricultural productivity, increase food shortages, and exacerbate malnutrition, particularly among smallholder farmers with limited adaptive capacity, and recommend climate-smart agricultural practices as pathways to resilience. Similarly, the International Food Policy Research Institute (2024) emphasizes that resilient agrifood systems require effective knowledge exchange, locally accessible information, and institutional mechanisms that facilitate informed community participation in food system governance, while HLPE-FSN (2024) argues that inclusive information systems are fundamental to strengthening local food systems because they enable communities to access knowledge, participate in decision-making, and respond effectively to emerging food security risks. Although these studies recognize the importance of information and communication, they pay limited attention to community information strategies as structured participatory mechanisms through which development actors, particularly FBOs, engage communities to promote sustainable food security and social transformation.

A parallel body of literature has predominantly focused on structural and socio-economic determinants of food security. Nakasone and Suvedi (2021) found that household size, farm size, off-farm income, and access to credit significantly influence food security among smallholder farmers in Ghana, while Ibrahim et al. (2020) and Omotesho et al. (2019) identified income, livelihood diversification, farm size, and market access as important predictors of household food security in Nigeria. While these studies provide valuable insights into the determinants of food insecurity, they largely conceptualize food security as an economic or production challenge and pay limited attention to how effective community information

systems facilitate behavioural change, collective learning, and community participation in addressing food insecurity, thereby overlooking the role of information as a strategic community engagement process capable of strengthening local ownership, resilience, and transformative development.

Evidence from humanitarian and development interventions further illustrates the consequences of weak community information systems. Muchadeyi (2022) observed that donor-supported food relief programmes in Zimbabwe, although effective in addressing immediate food shortages, contributed to long-term dependency because communities were inadequately involved in programme design and information sharing. Similarly, Adebisi et al. (2021) found that risk communication during the COVID-19 pandemic across thirteen African countries was constrained by institutional distrust, misinformation, and limited community engagement, reducing the effectiveness of public communication strategies. Although these studies highlight the importance of communication and information dissemination, they do not explain how structured community information strategies can strengthen participation, improve local ownership, and facilitate sustainable food security beyond emergency response. Collectively, the reviewed studies demonstrate broad consensus that access to information, communication, and knowledge is essential for improving food security; yet they primarily examine information as a supporting component of agricultural extension, disaster response, or public communication rather than as a deliberate community engagement strategy that empowers communities and strengthens participatory development processes. This gap is particularly evident within FBO interventions in Kenya's ASAL regions, where little empirical evidence exists on how community information strategies influence both food security and social transformation.

The study is anchored in three complementary theoretical perspectives. Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970/2020) holds that communication should be dialogical rather than one-directional, enabling communities to become active agents of change through participation, reflection, and collective action; where information flows only from FBOs to communities without structured feedback, communities remain positioned as passive recipients rather than co-authors of the conscientization process that genuine transformation requires. Stakeholder Theory (Freeman, 1984) complements this view by holding that organizations achieve more legitimate and effective outcomes when they systematically involve all parties affected by their objectives, implying that effective information flow and collaborative communication are necessary to strengthen coordination among FBOs, communities, and other development actors. Pateman's *Theory of Participatory Democracy* (1970) further suggests that access to information is a precondition for meaningful participation: without it, communities cannot exercise the informed voice that participatory structures such as meetings and consultative forums are designed to provide.

Despite sustained FBO programming in Isiolo County, food insecurity has persisted, raising the question of whether communication systems, as currently practiced, are diversified and responsive enough to enable communities to become informed, active participants in food security interventions rather than passive recipients of externally generated information. This article addresses that question by examining the first objective of a broader study on FBOs' community engagement strategies in Isiolo County: to assess the influence of FBOs' community information strategy on food security and social transformation. Specifically, it asks how the community information strategy employed by FBOs influences food security and social transformation in Isiolo County.

The relevance of this question is heightened by the specific communication landscape of Isiolo County, where limited network infrastructure, dispersed pastoralist settlement patterns, and

uneven mobile connectivity constrain the range of channels realistically available to FBOs. In such a setting, the choice between relying on established, low-cost channels such as community meetings and local radio and investing in newer digital platforms such as SMS-based alerts, is not merely a technical preference but a strategic decision with direct implications for how many community members, and which community members, are able to receive and act on food-security-related information in time to make a difference. Understanding the current state of that choice and its consequences for food security and social transformation is therefore a necessary first step toward strengthening FBOs' community information strategy in Isiolo County and comparable ASAL settings across Kenya.

2. Material and Methods

The study adopted a concurrent mixed-methods design, collecting quantitative and qualitative data within the same phase and integrating them at the point of interpretation rather than sequentially. The target population comprised the thirteen FBOs operating in Isiolo County for at least ten years with an explicit food security focus, together with their leaders (project managers, assistant managers, and coordinators) and purposively selected community representatives (women, youth, smallholder farmers, and persons with disabilities), yielding 36 valid questionnaire responses on the information-strategy construct. Ward Agricultural Officers and the County Director of Agriculture served as key informants.

The community information strategy was measured through four indicators, each rated on a five-point Likert scale: FBOs' utilization of diverse communication channels to ensure food security; FBOs' responsiveness to food security challenges; community support for effective communication by FBOs; and FBOs' adoption of effective communication strategies. The research instrument's content and face validity were established through expert review and piloting with senior FBO managers prior to data collection, and its construct and criterion validity were assessed following established procedures for social-science survey instruments (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2018). Internal consistency across the instrument's 28 items, covering all five engagement strategies, was tested using Cronbach's (1951) alpha computed on the full sample ($n = 36$); the resulting coefficient of 0.9948 exceeded the conventional 0.70 threshold recommended by Mugenda and Mugenda (2018), indicating strong reliability and consistency of the scales used, including the information indicators reported here.

Quantitative data were analyzed descriptively (frequencies and percentages) and through Pearson product-moment correlation to establish relationships between information-strategy variables and broader community engagement and social-outcome variables. Qualitative data from Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) were analyzed thematically, following an inductive approach in which recurring themes were identified, coded, and grouped before being related back to the quantitative findings. Questionnaires were self-administered with the support of two trained research assistants, who delivered and collected instruments from FBO offices and facilitated FGDs, while the researcher personally conducted KIIs with Ward Agricultural Officers and the County Director of Agriculture. Data collection was authorized by Tangaza University's Institutional Scientific and Ethics Research Committee and a NACOSTI research license, with supporting authorization from the Ministry of Education and the Isiolo County Commissioner. Informed consent was obtained from all participants; confidentiality and anonymity were assured; participation was voluntary; and county-level gatekeepers were consulted prior to community-level data collection.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 FBOs' Community Information Strategy: Descriptive Findings

The study sought to assess how the community information strategy employed by FBOs influences food security and social transformation. Table I presents the distribution of responses across the four indicators used to measure this construct.

Table I. FBOs' Community Information Strategy Indicators (n = 36)

Indicator	Strongly Disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	Not Sure (%)	Agree (%)	Strongly Agree (%)
FBOs utilize diverse communication channels to ensure food security	27.8	52.8	2.8	5.6	11.1
FBOs are responsive to food security challenges	-	36.1	-	36.1	27.8
Communities support effective communication by FBOs	27.8	41.7	13.9	8.3	8.3
FBOs have adopted effective communication strategies	36.1	33.3	13.9	11.1	5.6

Source: Researcher (2026); n = 36.

The findings reveal significant limitations in the effectiveness of communication approaches employed by FBOs. Specifically, 80.6% of respondents (52.8% disagree; 27.8% strongly disagree) indicated that FBOs do not utilize diverse communication channels, while 69.4% (41.7% disagree; 27.8% strongly disagree) reported insufficient community support for effective communication. Similarly, 69.4% (33.3% disagree; 36.1% strongly disagree) noted weak adoption of effective communication strategies to address emerging food security challenges. Although responsiveness showed relatively better performance, with 63.9% (36.1% agree; 27.8% strongly agree) acknowledging FBO responsiveness, a notable 36.1% still disagreed, indicating inconsistency in adaptive responses. Collectively, these findings suggest that inadequate communication systems constrain awareness, participation, and informed decision-making, thereby undermining food security outcomes and limiting social transformation.

These findings corroborate literature emphasizing the centrality of communication and responsiveness in community information strategies. The observed weaknesses align with Toromade et al. (2024), who identified limited access to context-specific knowledge and climate information as major constraints to sustainable food security among vulnerable farming communities, and with Muchadeyi (2022), who found that inadequate information sharing and limited community engagement undermine programme ownership and long-term sustainability. Studies by Nakasone and Suvedi (2021), Ibrahim et al. (2020), and Omotesho et al. (2019) focused on structural determinants such as income, farm size, and market access, but did not incorporate community information strategies, thereby overlooking a pathway for improving food security that the present findings show to be materially weak in practice.

3.2 Correlation Between Information-Strategy Variables and Community Engagement Outcomes

To examine how information-related variables relate to broader community engagement and social-outcome variables, Pearson product-moment correlation was computed between four information-strategy indicators, communication programme design (Prog), information dissemination initiatives (Init), local information systems (LocalS), and communication mechanisms (Mech), and four representative engagement and outcome variables: community meetings (Meet), feedback systems (Feedb), stakeholder partnerships (Partn), and project/social outcomes (PrSo). Table II presents the resulting correlation matrix.

Table II. Correlation Between Information-Strategy Variables and Community Engagement Outcomes (n = 36)

Variable	Meet	Feedb	Partn	PrSo
Prog	0.9343	0.8679	0.9222	0.9671
Init	0.9072	0.8942	0.9310	0.8938
LocalS	0.9134	0.8651	0.9215	0.9334
Mech	0.9474	0.8830	0.9391	0.9436

Note. Prog = Communication programme design; Init = Information dissemination initiatives; LocalS = Local information systems/structures; Mech = Communication mechanisms; Meet = Community meetings; Feedb = Feedback systems; Partn = Stakeholder partnerships; PrSo = Project/social outcomes. All coefficients significant at $p < .001$. Source: Researcher (2026).

The correlation findings strengthen the interpretation of the descriptive results by demonstrating that communication-related variables are strongly interconnected with broader community engagement and social transformation processes. Coefficients within this sub-matrix range from 0.8651 (LocalS-Feedb) to 0.9671 (Prog-PrSo), indicating very strong and statistically significant relationships ($p < .001$) among communication programme design, information dissemination, local information systems, communication mechanisms, meetings, feedback, partnerships, and social outcomes. Notably, the strong relationship between communication programme design and project/social outcomes ($r = .9671$) suggests that information-sharing mechanisms are closely embedded within participatory structures and collective engagement systems, while communication mechanisms showed a particularly strong association with community meetings ($r = .9474$). These findings imply that communication does not operate as an isolated intervention but rather as an enabling process that facilitates coordination, trust-building, knowledge exchange, and collective action within communities.

From a theoretical perspective, the strong relationships among meetings, feedback, and communication mechanisms indicate the presence of dialogical processes in which communities are drawn into shaping solutions, reflecting Freire's (1970/2020) concept of conscientization when such processes are structured well, and its shortfall when they are not. The present findings suggest a shortfall: although information-related variables correlate strongly with engagement outcomes in principle, the weak diversification of communication channels and limited community support documented in Table I indicate that this dialogical potential is not yet realized in practice. The results also support Stakeholder Theory (Freeman, 1984), which posits that organizational effectiveness is enhanced when all stakeholders are actively involved in decision-making; the high correlation between communication mechanisms and partnerships ($r = .9391$) suggests that inclusive information flow enables

FBOs to build stronger relationships with communities and other development actors. Similarly, the findings resonate with Pateman's (1970) Theory of Participatory Democracy, as strong associations between information variables and meetings demonstrate that access to information is closely tied to the participatory structures through which equity and shared ownership are fostered.

The pattern of correlations also lends itself to two further theoretical readings. The consistently strong linkage between communication mechanisms and downstream engagement variables is compatible with Contingency Theory (Lawrence & Lorsch, 1967), which holds that there is no single best way to organize communication; rather, the appropriate mix of channels depends on the specific social and infrastructural context in which an organization operates, an implication directly relevant to Isiolo County's uneven connectivity. Read alongside the Theory of Change (Shapiro, 2005), the interconnectedness of communication programme design, dissemination initiatives, local information systems, and communication mechanisms with meetings, feedback, partnerships, and social outcomes suggests that these variables function as linked steps along a single pathway: better-designed, more contextually adapted information systems feed into more effective meetings and feedback processes, which in turn support the partnerships and social outcomes associated with food security and transformation. Where any one link in that pathway, such as channel diversity, is weak - as the descriptive findings in Table I indicate, the pathway as a whole is constrained even where the underlying statistical associations remain strong.

3.3 Information-Strategy Variables and the Broader Transformation Outcome Set

To situate the information strategy within the study's wider correlation structure, the four information-strategy variables were further correlated against the full set of eight core community engagement and social transformation variables used across the broader study: communication channels (Chan), responsiveness (Resp), participation (Part), adaptability (Adap), inclusion (Inc), equity (Equi), specificity (Spec), and collaboration (Coll). Table III presents this correlation matrix.

Table III. Correlation Between Information-Strategy Variables and the Core Community Engagement and Social Transformation Outcome Set ($n = 36$)

Variable	Chan	Resp	Part	Adap	Inc	Equi	Spec	Coll
Prog	0.8563	0.8769	0.9208	0.9246	0.8696	0.8302	0.9119	0.8633
Init	0.8668	0.9047	0.9140	0.9273	0.8920	0.8713	0.9092	0.8233
LocalS	0.8490	0.9045	0.9184	0.9166	0.8879	0.8459	0.9249	0.8212
Mech	0.8433	0.8772	0.8955	0.9294	0.8426	0.8365	0.9057	0.8848

Note. Prog = Communication programme design; Init = Information dissemination initiatives; LocalS = Local information systems/structures; Mech = Communication mechanisms; Chan = Communication channels; Resp = Responsiveness; Part = Participation; Adap = Adaptability; Inc = Inclusion; Equi = Equity; Spec = Specificity; Coll = Collaboration. All coefficients significant at $p < .001$. Source: Researcher (2026).

All coefficients in Table III are positive, statistically significant ($p < .001$), and largely exceed 0.80, confirming that the study's information-strategy variables are highly interrelated with the wider set of community engagement and transformation outcomes rather than operating as an isolated construct. Communication programme design showed its strongest association with participation ($r = .9208$) and adaptability ($r = .9246$); information dissemination initiatives and

local information systems each showed their strongest association with adaptability ($r = .9273$ and $r = .9166$ respectively); and communication mechanisms showed their strongest association with adaptability ($r = .9294$) and specificity ($r = .9057$). Across all four information-strategy variables, adaptability and participation consistently emerged as the most strongly associated outcomes, while equity showed comparatively the weakest, though still strong, associations (ranging from $r = .8302$ to $r = .8713$). This pattern suggests that FBOs' information strategy, where it functions well, most directly strengthens communities' capacity to participate and to adapt to changing food security conditions, with more equitable distribution of benefits following somewhat less directly from information alone.

These findings extend the theoretical interpretation offered above. Read against Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, the strong linkage between information-strategy variables and participation supports the view that communication is foundational to conscientization, the process through which communities move from passive recipients to active agents of change (Freire, 1970/2020). The results also resonate with Arnstein's (1969) Ladder of Citizen Participation, which categorizes participation by the degree of citizen power it confers: the consistently strong, though not perfect, correlations between information-strategy variables and participation ($r = .8955$ to $.9208$) suggest that FBOs' communication practices in Isiolo County support participation that has moved beyond mere information-giving toward more substantive citizen involvement, even though, as Table I shows, that potential is not yet fully realized through diversified, well-supported channels. Taken together with Tables I and II, Table III reinforces the study's central argument: information functions as a foundational, integrated component of a wider participatory system rather than as a standalone communication activity, and weaknesses in its implementation, such as narrow channel diversity, constrain the whole system rather than communication alone.

3.4 Qualitative Findings and Further Discussion

Qualitative evidence from FGDs and KIIs further substantiates the gaps identified quantitatively, showing that community meetings and local radio are the primary communication channels used by FBOs, while SMS alerts are entirely absent. Community meetings accounted for the most frequently cited communication platform in both FGDs and KIIs, followed by local radio. Participants emphasized that community meetings facilitate dialogue, collective learning, and coordination of activities such as farming initiatives, savings groups, and food distribution programmes. However, overreliance on these traditional communication channels limits the reach, speed, and inclusivity of information dissemination, particularly among younger and technologically connected populations. These constraints mirror challenges identified by Adebisi et al. (2021), where weak communication systems undermined responsiveness despite existing institutional frameworks.

Taken together, the quantitative and qualitative findings provide converging evidence that ineffective community information strategies remain a significant barrier to sustainable food security and social transformation in Isiolo County. While communication systems moderately support responsiveness and coordination, and while information-related variables correlate very strongly with broader engagement outcomes when they are present, the channels through which that information travels remain narrow, weakly institutionalized, and insufficiently participatory. This pattern is consistent with global evidence emphasizing that resilient food systems require inclusive, evidence-informed decision-making and accessible information systems (HLPE-FSN, 2024; Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations et al., 2024), and it extends studies such as Nakasone and Suvedi (2021), Ibrahim et al. (2020), and Omotesho et al. (2019), which identified structural determinants of food security without

examining the communicative pathway through which communities become equipped to act on those determinants.

The findings also invite a brief theological reflection. Catholic Social Teaching holds that every human person possesses inherent dignity and therefore the right to participate in social, economic, and political life; in the context of food security interventions, communication systems are essential precisely because they enable communities to access information, express their needs, and participate meaningfully in decisions that affect their livelihoods. Read this way, the narrow, one-directional communication patterns documented here represent not only an operational weakness but a limitation on the dignified participation that FBOs, as faith-motivated actors, might otherwise be expected to prioritize. Diversifying and institutionalizing two-way communication is therefore both a practical and a normative priority for FBOs seeking to strengthen food security and social transformation in Isiolo County.

For FBO leadership, these findings carry direct practical implications. Communication strategy should be treated as a resourced programme component in its own right rather than an informal by-product of project implementation: FBOs should pilot low-cost digital channels such as SMS-based alerts alongside existing community meetings and local radio, and should build structured feedback loops, such as short community scorecards or suggestion mechanisms following meetings, that allow information to flow from communities back to FBOs and not only in the reverse direction. For county government and other development partners, the findings suggest that investment in shared communication infrastructure, such as community information boards or partnerships with local radio stations serving multiple FBOs, could address the channel-diversity gap more efficiently than each FBO developing separate systems independently. For the wider FBO sector operating in comparable ASAL counties, the strong correlations between communication mechanisms and downstream engagement outcomes suggest that investment in communication infrastructure is not a peripheral administrative cost but a foundational enabler of the participation, partnerships, and social outcomes that food security programming ultimately depends on.

4. Conclusions

This study set out to assess the influence of FBOs' community information strategy on food security and social transformation in Isiolo County. The findings show that communication systems used by FBOs remain inadequately diversified, weakly institutionalized, and insufficiently participatory, with a majority of respondents reporting the absence of diverse communication channels and weak community support for, and adoption of, effective communication strategies. Despite these operational weaknesses, information-related variables correlated very strongly with broader community engagement and social outcomes, indicating that information functions as a foundational, enabling process embedded within participatory structures rather than as an isolated communication activity. Qualitative evidence corroborated this pattern, showing continued reliance on community meetings and local radio, with digital channels such as SMS entirely absent. FBOs in Isiolo County should therefore diversify their communication channels, particularly toward mobile-based and other low-cost digital platforms, and institutionalize structured feedback loops that convert one-directional information-sharing into genuinely dialogical communication, consistent with Freire's (1970/2020) understanding of communication as a precondition for community agency and social transformation.

This study is subject to certain limitations. It focused on the thirteen FBOs operating within an explicit food security mandate in Isiolo County for at least ten years, together with their leaders and purposively selected community representatives; findings should therefore be interpreted within this bounded institutional and geographic context rather than generalized without further

verification to FBOs elsewhere in Kenya's ASAL counties. The modest quantitative sample ($n = 36$), while appropriate to the population of qualifying FBO leaders and representatives available in the county, limits the statistical power available for sub-group analysis, and the cross-sectional design captures communication practice at a single point in time. In addition, because information strategy was examined as one of five engagement strategies within a broader study, some of its correlational relationships with meetings, feedback, and partnerships necessarily overlap conceptually with the consultation and collaboration strategies examined elsewhere in that study, and should be read as indicative of a broader, mutually reinforcing engagement system rather than isolating information as a wholly independent causal factor. Future research should employ longitudinal or panel designs across a larger number of ASAL counties to establish whether diversifying communication channels, as recommended here, in fact produces the food security and social transformation gains that the correlational evidence suggests are possible, and should examine the specific role of mobile-based and digital communication platforms in strengthening FBO-community dialogue in similarly marginalized settings.

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