

Exploring gender dynamics in communication for Rift Valley fever (RVF) prevention among pastoralists in Isiolo County, Kenya

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Key messages

Information dissemination that does not consider the gendered impact of RVF may result in inadequate prevention and control measures

- Ineffective and **gender-blind communication** can significantly hinder RVF preventive and control efforts, potentially exacerbating RVF outbreaks. By failing to address the **specific needs and concerns of both men and women**, communication strategies may miss crucial opportunities to inform, empower, and mobilize communities.
- By understanding and addressing gender-specific communication barriers, we **can reduce inequalities** within the communities, by **inclusively** disseminate RVF information that empower men and women to be better prepared for outbreaks, reduce the overall impact of the RVF, and build resilience. In addition, collaboration by stakeholders can ensure that information about RVF reaches a wider audience, and is better understood, which could lead to more informed and equitable responses within communities

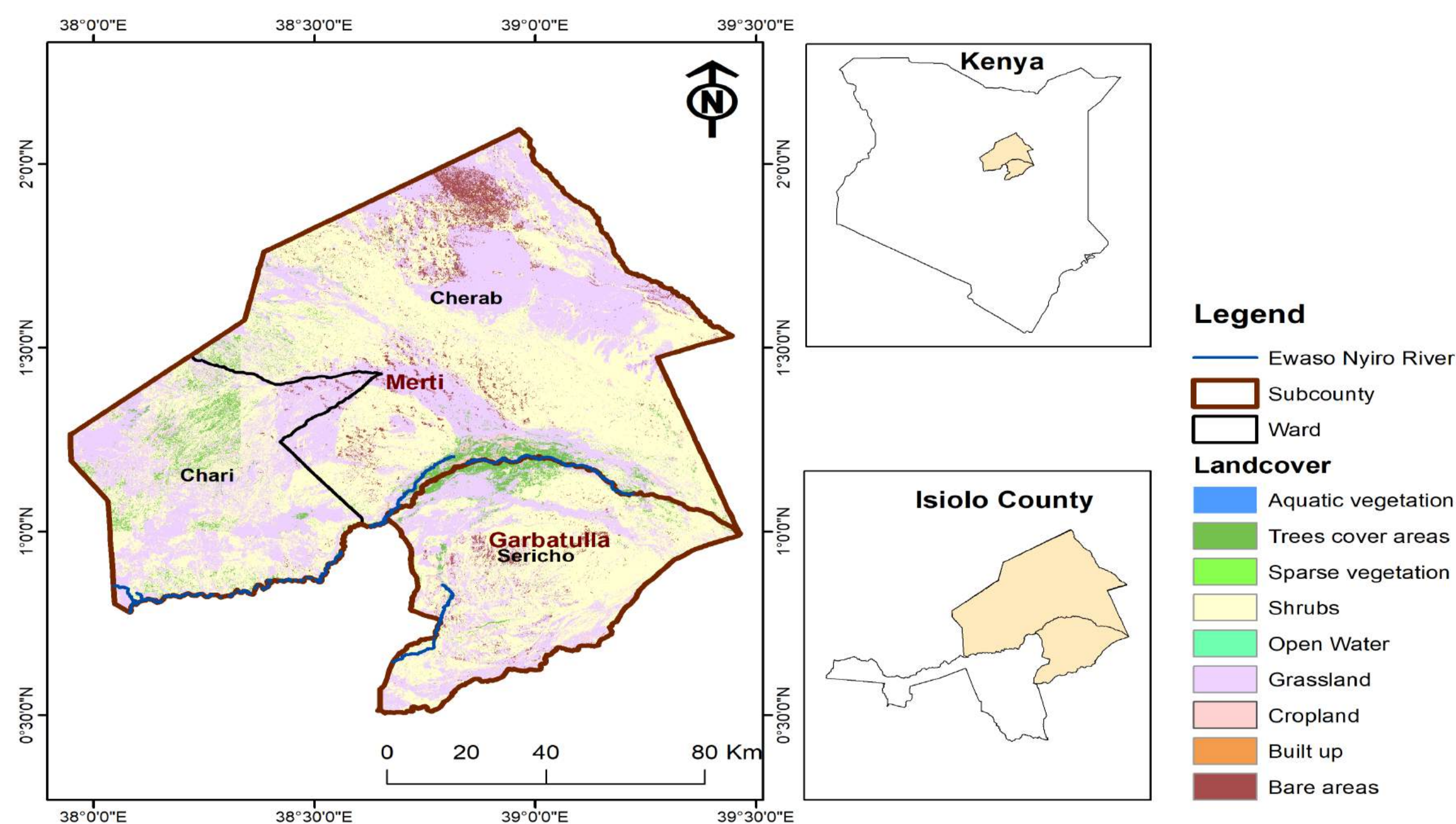
Context

- **Rift Valley fever** is a **zoonotic disease** that poses a **significant threat** to public health and livestock in Isiolo County, Kenya.
- **Women** often play a pivotal role in **livestock management**, despite **not many owning animals** in pastoralist communities.
- Yet communication **efforts related to RVF** outbreaks often **primarily target men**, who are typically seen as the primary **decision-makers**. This gender bias can lead to a significant **knowledge gap** between women and men **hindering effective prevention and control efforts**.



Photo by ILRI/ Irene Mutambo

Our approach



- A qualitative participatory approach was employed, utilizing focus group discussions (FGDs) and key informant interviews (KIIs)
- 116 participants across 16 FGDs and 13 KIIs were conducted in Isiolo County.
- Ethical approval and informed consent were sought before data collection

Outcomes

Crucial barriers to managing RVF outbreaks effectively

- Both men and women highlighted limited knowledge about RVF which hinders their ability to respond appropriately, potentially delaying crucial actions like seeking treatment and implementing preventive measures
- Both men and women reported limited media ownership (radios, poor networks, television), poor infrastructure (roads), and language barriers.
- Gender disparities, included women's limited access to information and training due to cultural restrictions causing their vulnerability to RVF during outbreaks.

Existing communication channels

- Men reported to access information about RVF through training, Community Disease Reporters, Community Health Volunteers, and fellow men. While most women get information from their husbands and fellow women

Conclusion

To improve RVF management, it is essential to enhance knowledge dissemination and address gender-specific barriers to ensure equitable access to information and resources for all community members. This inclusive approach not only reduces inequalities but also enhances community preparedness, mitigates the impact of RVF outbreaks, and builds resilience



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