

RADIO AND PANDEMICS

COVID-19 IN EAST AFRICA: How community
and vernacular radio are influencing social
and behaviour change

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INTRODUCTION

Radio is still the most consumed medium of communication in many parts of Africa. Unavailability of infrastructure such as electricity and poor internet connection, especially in rural parts of the continent, makes this old technology a very reliable tool for dissemination of information. Studies on how radio was used during the West African Ebola outbreak, and how it's currently being utilized during the novel Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) outbreak show that it can be an effective tool in influencing changes in social behaviours that might help in reducing the spread of contagious diseases.

COVID-19 IN EAST AFRICA

COVID-19, which was [declared a global pandemic](#) by the World Health Organization (WHO) in March 2020 has ravaged countries across the world. The virus has stretched the capacity of healthcare service provision even in developed countries, caused hundreds of thousands of deaths, and almost ground economies to a halt.

As of the 8th of June 2020, Kenya had recorded a total of 2,767 positive cases. Uganda had 646 reported cases and Tanzania had 509. Unlike the rest of her neighbours, Tanzania has not been regular in providing updates, with the last official numbers released on 29th April 2020. Tanzania's approach to containing the virus has also put scrutiny on President John Pombe Magufuli's leadership style.

"President Magufuli has downplayed the pandemic's threat and encouraged the use of local and home remedies such as drinking ginger and lemon tea and steam therapy as a way to prevent infection. He publicly questioned the efficacy of the COVID-19 tests used in Tanzania's laboratories. He then promised to send a plane to collect Madagascar's traditional remedy for the virus," reads part of an article by [Aikande Clement Kwayu](#), Ph.D., published

by [The Conversation](#); a non-profit media organization that publishes articles authored by academics and researchers.

The three East African countries of Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania reported their first case of COVID-19 on 13th March 2020. The patient who tested positive in Nairobi had travelled back to Kenya from the US via Heathrow Airport, London. Tanzania would record its first case three days later and Uganda almost a week and a half after that. Although the initial cases recorded in the region could be traced to recent foreign travels, it was evident from the onset that it was just a matter of time before an upsurge of infections due to local transmission.

The advantage that the three countries, and perhaps the rest of Africa, had was that they were one of the latter regions to be affected by the virus. They had seen what kind of interventions worked better. The virus was also getting into this part of the world when WHO had more informed guidelines on containing the pandemic. Therefore, initiating measures such as the closing of airports, lockdowns and curfews were not so complex decisions to make.

Explaining the necessity of these measures that were bound to inconvenience citizens to the masses was going to be difficult. Most of the populations in these countries live in rural areas and urban slums with no access to electricity or internet connection. Many had not seen what the virus was doing in other parts of the world.

Here, directives from governments and health officials on behavioural changes such as social distancing, regular hand-washing, discouragement of hand-shakes and hugs competed with deep-rooted cultural practices that encouraged the opposite of what the authorities were preaching, and myths and misinformation that were spreading like wildfire:

“COVID-19 cannot survive in humid environments.”

“Black people are immune to COVID-19.”

“COVID-19 is a Western myth.”

“The government is lying about COVID-19 in our country to attract donor funding.”

“Drinking sugarless black tea makes you immune to COVID-19.”

LESSONS FROM THE WEST AFRICA EBOLA OUTBREAK

During the Ebola crisis in West Africa in 2014, many [citizens living away from the capitals and big cities](#) did not know about the virus that was fast killing tens of people (the numbers grew exponentially to hundreds and thousands in weeks). With a majority of the population living in rural areas, radio was the fastest and most effective medium to reach them, and those in the hinterlands with accurate information on Ebola.

Mr Jefferson Massah works with the Liberia Media and Development Programme. The organization was founded after the 2014 Ebola outbreak in West Africa in partnership with [Internews](#), to enable, equip and empower the local media to access the tools and knowledge required to increase their sustainability and improve their professional skills and standards. In a recent webinar titled; ‘Radio journalism in a time of crisis,’ hosted by [Farm Radio International](#), he says that while working as a radio producer during the 2014 Ebola outbreak, misinformation about the disease was the biggest issue they tackled with their programming. They had to counter perceptions that the virus was man-made to wipe out certain ethnic groups. It was difficult to convince those who had symptoms of the disease to seek early treatment from designated treatment centres because many people in the communities thought that once someone went to the hospital they would die.

To tackle this perception, Mr Massah and his colleagues produced radio talk shows that interviewed survivors who had recovered from Ebola because of seeking early treatment.

“We realized that the message of fear that we were feeding our audiences with was counter-productive. Before these interviews, the tone of the messages was that ‘if you get Ebola, you will die.’ Hearing these experiences of people who had survived changed community perspectives,” he says.

[Experiences from West Africa](#) during Ebola outbreak and other outbreaks of emerging pathogens like SARS, H1N1, Zika Virus and now COVID-19 have shown that effectively responding to such outbreaks requires the use of social [and behaviour change communication](#) (SBCC) while other solutions like vaccines and treatments are sourced or researched.

Just like in the West African Ebola outbreak, many East Africans especially those living in rural areas and urban slums are still going on with their lives normally, especially in countries like Kenya and Tanzania where total lockdowns have not been imposed.

Many question the existence of the disease, while others hold on to myths such as claims that the disease does not affect black people, among other kinds of misinformation about COVID-19.

A majority of the over 150 million residents of these countries still rely on radio as their primary source of information. Many households are too poor to afford television services or even lack appropriate infrastructure like electricity that would enable them to consume other mediums like television.

Mr Tom Mboya, a communications consultant in Kenya, who is also a veteran broadcast journalist, acknowledges the influence of community and vernacular radio stations in shaping community perspectives.

“Across the audience divide, whether you are talking about television, digital, or radio audiences, they all want relatable content. For community and vernacular radio, this is a much simpler undertaking because the broadcasters are already speaking to audiences who are brought together by common interests, in the case of community radios, or by cultural and ethnic interests in the case of the vernacular. This makes it easier to specifically target these groups with messages aimed at influencing economic, political, or social perspectives. The ease with which such messages are produced and broadcast to these homogenous units using the most limited resources and skillsets compared to other mediums makes it more effective in such situations,” he says in an interview.

He advises that effectively using radio as a public health tool during pandemics requires the development of strategies that guarantees uniformity in messages produced and sent out.

This study which involved nine radio stations spread across Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania, found out that out of their initiatives, radio stations developed programming that has played a significant role in influencing behaviour changes that help reduce the spread of the virus. We conducted interviews with station managers, radio presenters, producers, and their listeners to find out what roles local radios were playing in the fight against the pandemic in these countries. Of interest to this study were Kenya’s Pamoja FM which broadcasts from Kibra slum in Nairobi, Sauti ya Pwani FM in Mombasa and Sky FM in Kisumu. In Uganda, we spoke to the staff of Spice FM in mid-western Uganda, Community Green Radio (CGR Radio) from central Uganda, and Kagadi Kibaale Community Radio (KKCR) based in Central Uganda. Radio Sauti FM in the lakeside city of Mwanza, FADECO Community Radio from Kagera region, and CG FM in Tabora was also of interest to us on the Tanzanian side.

We wanted to understand how they go about demystifying these myths and misinformation, providing accurate information on COVID-19, advocating for behaviour change, and coming up with innovations that help their listeners cope with the measures put in place by governments to contain the pandemic.

RADIO LANDSCAPE IN THE REGION

The three East African countries of Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania collectively have more than three hundred radio stations. The majority of these are either vernacular or community radio stations. Their audiences are largely homogenous; bound by ethnic, regional, or group interests.

With this kind of penetration, vernacular and community radio have become critically important tools for dissemination of information on COVID-19. They have also been used for promoting social and behaviour change within communities, and demystifying rumours, myths, and disinformation regarding the virus.

A [report](#) by Kenya's National Bureau of Statistics released in May 2020 says that 82 per cent of Kenyans received their information on COVID-19 from radio stations. Across the continent, a report released in April by global polling firm, GeoPoll indicated that 39 per cent of the continent's residents identified radio as their preferred source of information on the virus.

DEVELOPING RESPONSIVE CONTENT

One of the things that set community and vernacular radio stations apart from commercial radio stations in big cities is the kind of relationship that their staff has with their communities. The presenters and news anchors, while considered sort of celebrities are still so much part of the communities they live in. They are role models, protectors, and defenders of community interests, and more importantly, voices of authority.

As the virus was spreading into the region, radio stations were trying hard to figure out how best to pass information and education to their audiences. Identifying the right sources of information, in an environment where so many rumours, myths, and misinformation about the virus flying around.

How best do they package information to counter this?

This was even more challenging because none of the stations had prior experience with developing content during a pandemic. What they all agree on, is that they had to start doing something for their communities, starting with leveraging on the influence they already had.

Take the example of Mr Martin Nyoni, the Station Manager at Radio Sauti FM, in Mwanza, Tanzania – a town on the shores of Lake Victoria with a population of about [2.7 million](#) people. Every day when he left work for home or to run errands, he noticed that the local community was going on with their lives as usual despite the health officials encouraging measures like hand-washing, social distancing, and wearing of masks while in public places.

Like most rural areas in the region, motorbike taxis, locally known as '*bodaboda*' are the most preferred means of transport in Mwanza. At the various stations around the town and in villages where passengers picked their *bodaboda* from, there were no hand-washing stations, neither were the riders nor their passengers wearing face masks. Some carried even more than one passenger at a time.

Mr Nyoni immediately realized that the precautions being encouraged by the health officials were not being adhered to by this community who form part of his station's audience. Having witnessed what the virus had done in places like Italy, the USA, and the UK, he decided to use his radio's influence in adjusting their attitudes towards the virus. He started with his breakfast show called '*Morning Pressure*.'

After two days of appealing to his listeners to take the virus seriously and adhere to directives from government and health officials, he started noticing a gradual change. The *bodaboda* terminals closest to the radio station now had hand-washing stations for passengers and riders. Some of the riders were also wearing face masks.

The challenge that Mr Nyoni was having with residents of Mwanza was not unique. Across the East African region, and even perhaps the entire continent, community attitudes towards COVID-19 was a real threat to containing the disease. Most of the people working in radio stations that we spoke to saw themselves playing a very important role in this chain of information flow. Mr Nyoni says their effectiveness in passing information to their audiences stems from the fact that they understand the local customs, languages, and nuances better, and are therefore able to package the messages in a way that is most appealing to their audiences.

“While government officials are just names and voices that they hear over the media, we are people who live in their communities. We have built relationships of trust with them over time, through on-air and off-air engagements. We understand how they think, and what influences their perceptions. We can take advantage of this when packaging our messages,” he explains during the interview.

Radio Sauti FM which is owned by St. Augustine University, has been able to produce dramatized public service announcements (PSA) that break down desired behaviour changes to the realities of the lives of their audiences, such as the use of public transport vehicles, and social interactions in the community setup.

Ms Jael Lieta, the Station Manager at Sky FM in Kisumu, Kenya has been working in vernacular radio for the past 13 years. When it became evident that COVID-19 will most likely get into Kenya, she made adjustments to her

programmes to include content about the pandemic. This foresight enabled her to react faster when the first case was declared in Kenya. The daily briefings by the ministry of health and government officials were quite useful sources of reliable information for her audience who live in rural parts of Western Kenya.

“We started by plugging into live broadcasts by the state broadcaster, but we soon realized that it was not enough because after the broadcasts ended, our listeners would call, text or even contact us on social media with questions regarding the content of the briefings,” she says.

The briefings were mainly done in English, with few remarks made in Swahili, but a significant part of her audience was not too conversant with either language. They soon realized that they needed to breakdown the key points of each press briefing immediately it ended. They would highlight the latest figures from the government, the measures being put in place to contain the virus and information on how the public could protect themselves from the virus. Just like Mr Nyoni, she says being able to interpret how this information was going to affect her audience helped them understand the content better.

Across the board, and even among radio stations that were not part of this study, editorial coverage of COVID-19 constituted a significant part of daily programming. Even in cases where stations did not go out of their way to produce content that sought to encourage changes in hygiene and social behaviour, similar messages were carried out as news content that quoted government and health officials.

Ms Precious Naturinda is the Head of News at Uganda’s CGR Radio and doubles up as the host of a weekend magazine show focusing on women and gender issues. For her, it was as important to counter the rumours and misinformation by relaying to her audiences the most accurate

developments about the virus from Uganda, the neighbouring countries, and around the world.

“About 30 per cent of our news bulletin was reserved for coronavirus stories. We started by providing the local statistics as released by the government, highlighted measures being announced by the government to contain the virus, and because stories are always about people, each bulletin had a story focusing on how the virus or the measures put in place to contain it was affecting someone from the regions we broadcast in,” she explains.

Just like with Mr Nyoni and Ms Lieta, the decision by Ms Naturinda to allocate a specific quota of her news bulletin to covering COVID-19 was deliberate action with a very specific goal; providing accurate information.

She says having the audiences listen to voices of people who had either had a loved one taken into isolation after testing positive for the virus, or farmers who could no longer take their produce to the market because of the lockdown in Uganda made her listeners appreciate the gravity of the situation. It also gave those who were facing difficulties a sense of unity.

With the restriction on movements, and in the interest of safety for news sources and staff, technology helped in bridging the gap that was created by reduced or non-existent face to face interactions. Phone calls became the primary mode of interaction with sources, either as guests in live talk shows or as news sources.

The radio stations that were part of this study presented their messages in different ways; most of them using more than one format for dissemination. Interviews with experts and government officials, public service announcements, adverts, fact-checking programmes (as in the case of Sky FM which partnered with *Pesa-Check*), and even music (such as a song recorded by Ugandan musician Bobi Wine titled ‘Coronavirus Alert’ which is

played in radio stations across the region) were all being used at varying levels.

SUPPORTING COMMUNITIES ADHERE TO GUIDELINES

In the Farm Radio International webinar referred to earlier, Mr Massah acknowledges the contribution that teaching their listeners how to undertake their daily activities like farming or going to the market while protecting themselves from the Ebola virus had on their success.

Education is one of the ordinary activities that almost have ground to a halt in the region. With school closures in most parts of the continent, lessons are being delivered via internet applications like *Zoom*, *Microsoft Teams*, and *Skype*. While these tools help keep learners engaged, it locks out those from rural areas with bad internet connectivity and even poor families in urban areas who cannot afford high-speed internet.

In Uganda for example, the government has paid some radio stations to deliver learning materials to their listeners through education programmes. However, not all radio stations benefitted from this initiative. To address this, CGR Radio partnered with teachers living near their station to deliver academic content. This they say is helping the learners stay engaged during this period instead of going out to play with their peers and risking contracting or spreading the virus.

At the Dadaab refugee camp in Kenya, a local radio station, *Gargar FM*, is giving hope to children seeking education. Mr Tukow Nuuh, a programme manager with [Save the Children](#) says the radio programme ensures that children in the camp continue with their learning in a secure environment even as schools remained closed.

“Young learners, especially those in the refugee camp are more affected since they cannot access digital learning tools,” he said in an interview published on the *Daily Nation* of 20th May 2020.

The local radio station, supported by UNHCR and Save the Children broadcasts lessons to about 40,000 school-going children at the camp. Because most children here are late-starters, the lessons offered are non-formal, a crash course of sorts to assist them to catch up with their peers.

ENGAGEMENT AND TRUST

Listeners of community and vernacular radio stations perform a critical role in the development of their programming content. Producers and presenters in these radio stations have over time reached out to their listeners building a sort of relationship where they make part of the production teams. This has frequently been achieved through community outreach, listener clubs, and roadshows for commercial vernacular radio stations.

In Kibra, the largest informal settlement Africa, residents engage with their elected leaders every Thursday morning at the Pamoja FM studios located within the slum. In May, the sprawling settlement was identified as one of the COVID-19 hotspots in Nairobi. In the programme, they discuss the challenges they face in adhering to the government guidelines and directly engage with their leaders on how to solve their problems.

While for some radio stations it might not possible to have these face to face interactions with most of their audiences during a pandemic like this one, such relationships assist them in understanding their listeners better and be able to tailor their programming in ways that help them achieve the greatest impact.

Ms Leila Bbaale is the Head of News at Uganda’s Spice FM, a commercial radio station that broadcasts in four local languages. A key segment of their

listeners are refugees from the Democratic Republic of Congo and South Sudan, who are hosted in two camps within their district. Being able to speak to them in their native languages such as Kinyabwisha, Kigegere, Swahili, Alur, and Arabic makes them engage better with the station.

“We have set aside two programmes every weekday to handle issues relating to COVID-19. We have an interactive programme where listeners can call in with their questions and the health professionals or government officials whom we have in-studio or linking in via phone lines can respond to the issues they have,” she explains.

Equally important is being able to be trusted as a source of reliable information during a pandemic is not merely something that comes about overnight for these radio stations. As Mr Tom Mboya pointed out in the onset, these media houses have developed the trust they have with their communities over the years by making their issues centric to their programming. The kind of loyalty drawn from that commonality of interests is not easily found among listeners of commercial radio stations in the big cities.

At Uganda’s CGR Radio which broadcasts in Luganda and Runyakitara to audiences in the western part of the country, the staff record personalized COVID-19 messages that played throughout the day at the station.

“It’s the people who have been giving them trusted news for years, it’s the presenter who has been entertaining them, it’s the weekend magazine farming show host who teaches them how to get a better yield from their farms. These are voices they already trust, and when they tell them to do something that will save their lives, they are inclined to listen,” says Mr Julius Kyamanywa, the Station Manager.

In an article published in [The Conversation](#), Sonak D Pastakia, a Professor at [Purdue University](#) (USA), says research from Kenya in the fight against other

viruses showed that community-centred approaches “helped make evidence-based information more accessible for the population ... and subsequently helped to improve health outcomes with limited additional costs.”

With social media frequently used to spread misinformation, and the challenges of poor infrastructure, Prof. Pastakia pleads the case for radio as an important tool in delivering trusted information.

“A combination of print, radio, text message, phone, and online messaging should be introduced from trusted sources to ensure citizens have access to the latest evidence-based information,” he advises.

He says “increasing awareness in these ways would help to relieve the burden on health workers. They devote precious time correcting the public’s misconceptions and they sometimes face aggressive behaviour from a panicking public.”

INNOVATIVE APPROACHES

Fact-checking is gaining popularity as a means of countering misinformation. Having an already existing information verification system helped Kenya’s Sky FM address some of the rumours that were doing rounds on social media.

They partnered with [Pesa Check](#), a Kenyan fact-checking initiative that they had in the past worked with to establish a fact-checking desk at the station. They analyzed some of the misleading information that was doing rounds on social media and in partnership with *Pesa Check* sought the accurate position of the claims from the government press briefings and Ministry of Health and WHO websites. The results of the fact checks would then be relayed to listeners on a new segment that was attached to the day’s news bulletins. Every weekday produced three of such segments.

Other than tracking rumours and misleading information, Sky FM also used social media platforms to relay the results of the fact-checks to their audiences on Facebook and Twitter.

“When COVID-19 had just gotten to Kenya, everybody had something to say about it. There were claims that because Kenya is a humid country people here cannot get the virus, but we learned that people were contracting the virus even in countries with warmer weather. It was really important for us to dissect this information for our listeners so that they can distinguish between the truths and the lies,” says Ms Lieta, the station manager.

Mr James Openda is an ardent listener of Sky FM. He lives in a village called Kibos on the outskirts of Kisumu City. He is also an adherent of the *Legio Maria* sect, known for their preference for religious rituals over modern medicine. He says when the government announced the ban on going to places of worship, they still secretly went to church on weeknights for group prayers.

“I was hearing people say many things about this disease here in the village,” he says referring to the rumours about the virus not affecting people who live in places with warm weather. “I am uneducated and did not understand many things about this disease. This programme on the radio (Sky FM) made me learn many things about it. Many of the things I was hearing before were untrue. Today I only pray with my family inside my house, I do not even allow guests to enter,” he says during our interview.

In Tanzania, Mr Joseph Sesiko, the director of FADECO Community Radio which broadcasts from Karagwe region in the north-western part of the country is already working with other community radio stations in developing joint messages on the virus. The station that was formed to promote environmental conservation was able to leverage its existing network of fellow broadcasters to achieve this.

“We have learnt quite a bit from our experience so far. We can tell from the feedback we get what is working with our audience and what isn't. We are now sharing this information with our peers and even helping smaller radio stations develop this kind of content,” he said during a telephone interview.

As much as the stations were able to provide more accurate information, it was equally significant that this information reaches as many people as possible. To this end, Uganda’s Spice FM managed to set up a repeater station at one of the refugee camps in the Mid-Western part of the country. Solar-powered loudspeakers connected sub-station inside the camp ensured that the refugees who were mostly from the DRC would be able to listen to programming in their native languages. These programmes included COVID-19 messages.

CHALLENGES

Radio stations in Tanzania intimate they are finding it difficult to influence significant behaviour change following the stance adopted by President Magufuli.

“How do we convince our listeners that this disease is dangerous when we don’t have data to back up our claims?” posed Mr Nyoni during our interview.

Being neighbours with both Kenya and Uganda, the controversial statements made by Tanzania’s president many times adds to fuel misconceptions across the border, especially when local policies seem to be inconveniencing the public.

RADIO UNDER ‘THE NEW NORMAL’

Across East Africa, cases of COVID-19 are still rising even as we start conversations about easing restrictions and opening up economies.

Infections are higher than they were at the time we initiated lockdowns, curfews and restriction to movement.

What will be expected of radio under 'the new normal?' While this study has shown that radio in general, and community and vernacular radio stations, in particular, have played critical roles in helping their communities not just understand the pandemic better, but also change their behaviour in ways that limit transmission of the virus, several gaps still exist.

We still face challenges in adherence to certain containment measures like social distancing, especially where these recommendations affect people's livelihoods. Daily wage earners who work in crowded places are more likely to still go to those places in situations where governments have not initiated social protection measures like providing food rations. These kind of people are more inclined to believe the misinformation they come across on social media platforms or passed to them by word of mouth even when they have access to more accurate information.

At a time when propaganda and conspiracy theories about the virus are spread by influential people in the society; even heads of states like are the case with Tanzania, it becomes difficult to convince the masses otherwise. This is why innovative approaches such as fact-checking should become part of daily programming if radio stations are going to help their listeners fight this virus.

Radio, specifically community and vernacular radio should take up their agenda-setting role more seriously going forward, cognizant of the fact that they have the biggest audience in the region. This will call for constant analysis of the strategies adopted by governments in their attempts to contain the pandemic.

While most of the interventions we heard about in this study were the products of the different radio stations ingenuity, there is a need to have a

more structured effort when it comes to using radio as a tool for influencing desired social and behaviour change during 'the new normal,' and for future pandemics. These strategies need to be inclusive, not leaving out other broadcasters especially community radios which are often ignored, at times because they speak to fewer people.

From the experience with Ebola in Liberia, as was shared by Mr Massah, when the message is not properly structured, radio stations might end up causing more harm than good. Content producers in radio stations need to be trained on how to develop key messaging whether as public service announcements or usual programming content. This will have to be complemented by constant evaluation on the impact of the messages, something that is currently non-existent in most stations, and possibly can't be done outside a structured programme.

Considering the important role radio stations play in pandemics, will also mean including them when planning for resource allocation. Pandemics like COVID-19 which has led to a near-collapse of many economies also deny radio stations millions of dollars in revenue. All the radio stations mentioned in this report have had a significant reduction in revenue due to the effects of the pandemic. This is a result of advertisers, both big and small, reducing their marketing spending or sponsors reassigning funds to other forms of interventions in the case of community radios. Continuing to play the roles that will be expected of them in the future, will require them to be allocated resources that keep them on-air during these difficult economic times.

LIST OF SOURCES

1. [Aikande Clement Kwayu](#), PhD: [Article](#) published by 'The Conversation' on 31st May 2020 titled: *Tanzania's COVID-19 response puts Magufuli's leadership style in sharp relief.*

2. Mr Jefferson Massah: *Interview from Liberia via Zoom by Nora Young of CBC's Radio One during a Farm Radio International [Webinar](#) titled: 'Radio journalism in a time of crisis.'*
3. Mr Tom Mboya: *Interviewed by Daniel Ominde on phone from Nairobi on 31st May 2020.*
4. Mr Martin Nyoni: *Interviewed by Daniel Ominde via Zoom from Mwanza, Tanzania on 19th May 2020.*
5. Ms Jael Lieta: *Interviewed by Daniel Ominde via Zoom from Kisumu Kenya on 20th May 2020.*
6. Ms Precious Naturinda: *Interviewed by Daniel Ominde via Zoom from Kiboga, Uganda on 19th May 2020.*
7. Mr Tukow Nuuh: *Interviewed by Delphine Mugo and Florence Dzame for a newspaper article published by the Daily Nation of 20th May 2020, Pg. 19.*
8. Mr Adam Hussein: *Interviewed by Daniel Ominde on phone from Nairobi on June 4th 2020.*
9. Ms Leila Bbaale: *Interviewed by Daniel Ominde via Skype from Hoima, Uganda on 30th May 2020.*
10. Mr Julius Kyamanywa: *Interviewed by Daniel Ominde via Zoom from Kiboga, Uganda on 19th May 2020.*
11. Prof. Sonak D Pastakia: [Article](#) published by 'The Conversation' on 14th May 2020 titled: *Lessons in explaining viruses to the public: rely on science.*
12. Mr James Openda: *Interview conducted by Daniel Ominde at Kibos in Kisumu, Kenya on 27th May 2020.*
13. Mr Joseph Sesiko: *Interview conducted by Daniel Ominde via WhatsApp call from Karagwe, Tanzania on 26th May 2020.*

ABOUT THE RADIO STATIONS

1. Sky FM is a commercial vernacular radio station that broadcasts from the city of Kisumu in Western Kenya. The station broadcasts in Luo, to about 380, 000 listeners from Kisumu, Siaya, Homabay and Migori counties. All the presenters at the station are trained journalists. The station funds its operations through advertisements from large corporations and small businesses, and running programmes sponsored by NGOs.
2. Pamoja FM is a community radio station that broadcasts in Swahili from Kibra slums in Nairobi, Kenya. The station was formed in 2007 to empower the youth of Kibra and its environs through education, information and entertainment. Due to extreme unemployment and extreme poverty, crime and insecurity are rampant here. The station 's founders hoped to use this platform to provide hope and education on life skills to dissuade the youth from venturing into crime. In the chaos that rocked Kenya in 2007 following the disputed presidential elections, Kibra was one of the violence hotspots. The station's activities are funded through donations, sponsored programmes by NGOs and advertisements by small businesses.
3. Sauti Ya Pwani FM – they describe themselves as “a commercial radio station that broadcasts from Mombasa to the coastal regions of Kenya.” ‘*Sauti ya Pwani*’ is Swahili for ‘the Coastal Voice.’ Even though the station identifies itself as a commercial radio station, it's programmes feature a mixture of content that you will predominantly find in community radio stations with light entertaining programmes that are synonymous with commercial stations. These range from educative, religious, topical issues to lifestyle programmes and music shows. It funds its activities through advertisements from local businesses and running programmes sponsored by NGOs.

4. Spice FM was started 12 years ago as a community radio station but later on transformed into a commercial radio station to enable it to sustain its activities. The station broadcasts from Hoima district in mid-western Uganda. The station broadcasts in Kinyabwisha, Kigegere, Swahili, Alur and Arabic to about 800,000 listeners who include refugees from DRC and South Sudan. Its operations are funded through advertisements from large corporations and small businesses, and running programmes sponsored by NGOs
5. Community Green Radio (CGR Radio) is a community radio station based in Kiboga, Central Uganda. The radio is an offshoot of the sustainability School Program which works on empowering communities to identify their rights and entitlements and works towards attaining and defending them. The radio is aimed at amplifying the voices of local communities in the eco-sensitive Bunyoro and Buganda Regions to effectively participate in natural resource management processes. Its operations are funded through donations, advertisement from small businesses and running sponsored programmes.
6. Kagadi Kibaale Community Radio (KKCR) is based in Kagadi Town Council of Kagadi district mid-western Uganda. The station is a product of the partnership between the communities in Greater Kibaale region and URDT, an indigenous nongovernmental organization. It is part of East African Community Media Programme initiated in 1992 after the RIO World Earth Summit in De-Janeiro Brazil. Its operations are funded through donations, advertisement from small businesses and running sponsored programmes.
7. FADECO Community Radio operates from the region of Kagera, Tanzania. This region hosted about one million Rwandese and Burundi refugees who have left many economic and social challenges resulting

from the Rwanda and Burundi conflicts. These problems led to the UN system in Tanzania to develop a special UN programme on North Western Tanzania to assist those communities through a post refugee transition period. The station was set up with a grant of only USD 14,000 from UNESCO IPDC in 2007. Its operations are funded through donations, advertisement from small businesses and running sponsored programmes.

8. Radio Sauti FM is owned by St. Augustine University of Tanzania (SAUT), a private university in the lakeside city of Mwanza. The radio station was founded to provide training to students undertaking media studies, initially broadcasting to its 7,000 student population. The station's operations are mainly funded by the university, donations and sponsored programmes by NGOs.
9. CG Radio is a community radio station based in Tabora region, Tanzania. The station broadcasts in Swahili and its content mainly features educative programmes for school-going children, agricultural and environmental programmes, civic and governance programmes and news. The station funds its operations from donations, running programmes sponsored by NGOs and advertisements from small businesses.