ETHICS IN ETHNIC MEDIA
Assessing the ethical and professional competence of vernacular radio stations when discussing sensitive issues in Kenya
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Media Council of Kenya
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List of abbreviations and acronyms

KARF  Kenya Audience Research Foundation
CA    Communications Authority of Kenya
CORD  Coalition for Reforms and Democracy
KBC   Kenya Broadcasting Corporation
MCK   Media Council of Kenya
SPSS  Statistical Package for Social Sciences
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Foreword

Radio has become such a vital and indispensable tool for governing in Africa that it is difficult to imagine how modern African societies could be run without the use of radio; it is therefore considered the only truly mass medium in Africa. The process of democratisation in many African countries including Kenya has contributed to the calls for the liberalisation of the media sector bringing forth community media, which has acquired a special place as one form of independent media capable of evolving a community managed and more interactive communication, and programming of issues on public awareness and human activity. This liberalisation of the airwaves has allowed for the development of private radio stations that cater for various communities by broadcasting community service programs.

Vernacular radio stations tend to build solidarity within the ethnic background where they have a lot of influence on their audiences. However, some vernacular radio stations have been accused of disseminating information that is divisive and threaten the state of national cohesion in the country. They sacrifice professionalism for ethnicity as the information disseminated to the audience is more subjective than objective.

The media owners should be objective when they start these stations with their sole goal being to inform the people in their local language; they should bring in programmes that are national oriented and focusing on research to know what really affects their community in general. We all respect our different indigenous languages and we accept and embrace the royalty and nobility they deserve as we cannot deny that it is part of us and will forever remain so.

The role of vernacular radio stations in promoting interaction and expanding the democratic space in Kenya cannot be ignored. However, it should be remembered the vernacular radio stations have in the past received criticism and lashing from election observers, human rights activists and even the government over their negative role during the post- elections violence. The Media Council of Kenya has undertaken a continuous assessment of the performance of radio stations in the country through its media monitoring department. It is therefore important to note that the vernacular radio stations have improved tremendously in their performance over the last few years.

HARON MWANGI
Chief Executive Officer & Secretary to the Council
Executive summary

Vernacular radio stations in Kenya have increased tremendously since 2002. Before then, the Kenya Broadcasting Corporation was the only broadcaster in the country with local language broadcasting. Besides English and Swahili, it also offered Kikuyu, Dholuo, Kalenjin and Luhya, among other local language programming.

Despite the growth and popularity of local language broadcasting, vernacular radio stations were on the spotlight for their alleged complicity in the 2007/2008 post-elections violence in Kenya. This is especially because the Waki and Kriegler reports accused vernacular radio stations of involvement in the post-election violence. Even though they are supposed to adhere to ethical and responsible reporting and presentation, local language radio stations are increasingly resorting to sensationalist broadcasting.

This study sought to establish the level of adherence to the Code of Conduct for the Practice of Journalism by various vernacular radio stations in Kenya. It also explored the manner in which vernacular radio stations covered various key but controversial issues that have affected the country like ethnic conflicts and tensions, and terrorist attacks. In this category includes the Mpeketoni attacks. Among the study objectives was to establish the level of professionalism among talk-show hosts and radio presenters in terms of moderation and their knowledge of the issues they discuss.

From the study, it was evident that talk shows and interviews analysed contained inaccurate and unsubstantiated claims. Although the discussions were moderated, many callers were allowed to express views that were clearly inaccurate or false. The use of emotional and imprecise expressions that are unacceptable as per Article 12 of the Code of Conduct, were commonplace in talk shows and interviews. Guests, most of them politicians, were also part of these unaccountable and misleading talk shows. It was also evident that some media owners exerted undue and unprofessional influence in the operations of the vernacular radio stations and thereby created a tough environment for editors to undertake ethical programming decisions.

Accordingly, there is need for the radio stations to improve the quality of their programmes particularly when sensitive matters are the subject of discussions or interviews. In addition, trained and professional vernacular radio hosts should be recruited and regularly trained to avoid some of the pitfalls currently exhibited by the stations.
Key findings

- During the period of monitoring, the most popular topic, accounting for 65 per cent of the total airtime, was Saba Saba. Insecurity came in second at 18.6 per cent while Mpeketoni was third with 14.6%.

- More than a third (31.4%) of the talk shows and interviews analysed contained inaccurate and unsubstantiated claims. Fortunately, almost two thirds, or 64% of the shows, were adjudged to be accurate. The hosts or radio stations did not make any attempt to block people from making baseless statements.

- 67.4% of the discussions and interviews were factual and accurate while 12.8% contained inaccurate information.

- The use of emotional and imprecise expressions, unacceptable as per Article 12 of the Code of Conduct, was evident in 8% of the discussions and interviews analysed.

- Politicians made up most of the invited guests at 51.2, experts 25.6% and ordinary people 17.4%.

- About half, or 46.7% of the talk-show and interviews analysed, challenged some of the stereotypes expressed on the programmes. This was done by both the hosts and callers. 20.7% did not seek to challenge the stereotypes.

- The support given to particular stations was based largely on their listenership base. For instance, most of the callers to vernacular radio stations in the Coalition for Reforms and Democracy (CORD) strongholds supported the issue of Saba Saba while strongly condemning the Mpeketoni killings. They blamed the government for the killings.

- Employment in vernacular radio stations is not based on merit, training or professional qualifications. Instead, owners play a significant role in the hiring of staff. In stations run by owners’ relatives, associates and friends oftentimes compromise ethical and professional requirements.

- Financial wellbeing of the stations and staff remuneration determines the stations’ performance and ability to fend off advertiser and supporter influence. In other words, the wealthy often have their way in the stations and can use their resources to buy air-time to denigrate opponents or the delicate situation in the country.

- Because of poor pay, journalists are now allied to county government as workers and “consultants”. These journalists draw wages and allowances from county governments, officials and politicians while at the same time working for various media enterprises.


Section I

1.0 Introduction

Vernacular radio is considered one of the most important platforms of interaction and socialisation. It sometimes offers a voice to the voiceless and allows rural communities to play an active role in their development. It allows for greater access to information and, perhaps more importantly, helps in the development of democratic societies by providing a forum to respond to and question those in power. The 2007/2008 post-election violence painted a grim picture of vernacular radio stations as stated in the Kriegler and Waki reports. The two reports point out that some of the vernacular FM stations contributed to a climate of hate, negative ethnicity and may have incited violence. This is attributed to the content broadcast. Some of the FM stations included Kameme, Inooro, and Coro which broadcast in Kikuyu; Kass FM in Kalenjin, among others. They thus breached a number of clauses in the Code of Conduct for the practice of journalism.

The violations might have resulted from the freedom that the media now enjoys. Prior to the reintroduction of multiparty democracy in 1991, media practitioners were often harassed, tortured, imprisoned, persecuted and fined for expressing their views. During such times, censorship and self-censorship also ensued, stemming from fear of reprisals by the state which created a certain form of extreme caution that hindered overt coverage and reporting of issues considered sensitive and politically incorrect. It should, however, be noted that some of the issues that are not ethically and professionally discussed in the vernacular radio stations have the potential to exacerbate latent conflict and destabilise the peaceful coexistence in the society and promote violence. Insecurity, land issues and politically instigated conflicts are topical discussions in vernacular FM radio stations. These have the potential to foment ethnic hatred and/or incite, organise, or plan for violence and thus should be monitored to avert violence.

Vernacular radio stations in Kenya face a host of challenges including financial instability and insecurity, lack of staff training opportunities, and lack of adequate equipment. Regardless, they are still expected to uphold accountability, ethical and professional standards, and respect the golden principles that guide broadcasting.

1.2 Objectives

As part of its mandate of promoting professionalism in the media sector, the Media Council of Kenya sought to assess the performance of the vernacular radio stations in June and part of July 2014. The coverage focused on the Code of Conduct for the Practice of Journalism in Kenya. This specifically focused on areas namely, the Mpeketoni attack, land issues, general insecurity, and Saba Saba. The following were other objectives:

i. To establish the manner in which vernacular radio stations covered various key but controversial issues affecting the country including Mpeketoni attacks.

ii. To establish the level of professionalism among talk show hosts and radio presenters in terms of moderation and in-depth knowledge of issues under discussion among other aspects.
1.3 Methodology

This was majorly a qualitative research, however quantitative research was also employed in the analysis. It sampled programmes from Ramogi, Kass, Athi-ani, Rahma, Mulembe, Egesa and Muu-ga radio stations. Indicative from this list is that a team of eight coders (who speak and understand the local language) were selected and each allocated one station. The work was delimited to morning talk shows and interviews. These programmes often run between 6am and 10am. Data was extracted from Volicon media monitoring module and analysed using SPSS software.

Even though there are over 30 vernacular radio stations, this study focused on those it considered to have a sizeable listenership in Kenya. This was further based on findings from the Kenya Audience Research Foundation indicating the size of the stations’ audience shares.

Specifically, the following data collection techniques were used.

**Document analysis:** Previous reports and other publication on vernacular stations were reviewed and relevant information extracted. Generally, at this point, the report basically examined how the subject has previously been analysed to provide the context.

**Content analysis:** The study focused on all talk shows/interviews from the above mentioned radio stations. Here, the focus was local language content in the sampled radio stations.

**Key informant interviews.** Semi-structured interviews were conducted with editors and media managers of the vernacular radio stations. The research was specifically interested in finding out the challenges that the stations face with regards to ethical and professional reporting and programing in vernacular radio stations.

1.4 Topical issues monitored in vernacular radio stations

1.4.1 Saba Saba

This was used to refer to the 7th Day of July 2014 - a day when members of CORD resorted to a major political rally after their demands for national dialogue failed. Saba Saba was reminiscent of the 1992 protests led by political activists like Kenneth Matiba. Saba Saba was born to agitate for great political change in an era marked by KANU dictatorship. The name Saba Saba has since then been associated with protests that happen on the same date to demand for political reforms.

After the Saba Saba protests, CORD indicated that it would demand for a national referendum given the worsening insecurity and economic woes that the Jubilee government had failed to tackle. Police had tried to stop the opposition rallies, citing security concerns. Hundreds of police ringed Uhuru Park, the site of the gathering, to keep order. Predictions of widespread violence proved untrue as many people gave the protests a wide-berth. Bar few skirmishes between rock-throwers and police, the day passed largely peacefully. Discussions around Saba Saba revolved around political disagreements between Jubilee and CORD parties.

1.4.2 Mpeketoni

On 15 June 2014, about 50 masked gunmen raided a police station and homes in Mpeketoni town in Lamu County. According to eye-witnesses, the gunmen
shot at random and were seen to be targeting people from a certain ethnic group and religious affiliation. The gunmen burned hotels, restaurants and government offices. The gang chanted Islamic slogans, and selected non-Muslim victims as they began the killings. The attackers moved about Mpeketoni for some three hours before running off into the bush. They left more than 60 people dead.

Although the Somalia-based Al-Shabaab claimed responsibility for the attacks, citing, among other reasons, Kenya’s intervention in Somalia as a motivating factor, the Kenyan government attributed the attacks to domestic politics rooted in ethnic and religious tensions in the country.

While raising serious debate over apparent underlying causes, the Mpeketoni attacks are significant in the way they illustrate emerging modifications in the modi operandi of some terrorist outfits in East Africa and the Horn of Africa. Unlike previous attacks, the operatives were selective in targeting their victims. Whereas men were killed, women and children were spared, suggesting a deliberate attempt by the groups to improve their image.

1.4.3 Insecurity
Security matters are complex, affecting almost all facets and sectors of the country. And that many journalists hardly understand them is not a secret.

Insecurity is manifested in small-time attacks to massacres like the Mpeketoni killings. These issues are not only discussed in national radio stations but also in vernacular radio stations. Sometimes such discussions are laced with misinformation and inaccuracies as to their causes and impact and even solutions.

To help mitigate security threats and their impact of the country, state security apparatuses engage in tactful, reactive and sometimes secretive measures. These actions mostly require discretion, and the media is often either barred from covering them or coopted to give positive coverage to the activities. While doing this, however, the media risks being accused of complicity. What’s more, lack of experience on covering security issues can undermine the media’s ability and credibility as a watchdog. To play an effective role in overseeing the security sector, journalists must have a degree of distance from government and protection from intimidation and threats.

1.4.4 Land Issues
Land issues have always been a source of conflict in sub-Saharan Africa. Where land access in Kenya had traditionally been considered as relatively egalitarian, existing inequalities in land ownership means land is one of the most serious causes of conflict.¹

It is suspected that, among other things, land was the cause of the 2007/2008 post-election violence which caused 1,300 deaths and the displacement of as many as 600,000 people. Much of the violence was linked to long-standing land disputes. Kenya has endured a long history of land conflicts, dating back to its colonial period when first the Germans and then the British promulgated policies and practices that alienated people from their customary land and pitted one ethnic group against another. These policies were extended after independence. Ethnic divisions, especially over traditional land, were exploited for short-term political ends. Kenya’s Constitution (2010), however, provides hope that some historical injustices will be addressed.

Discussions on land issues lie at the core of community interactions in majority of societies in Kenya. Vernacular radio stations act as important platforms and key channels for the discussion of land matters. It has been proven that local land conflicts can erupt into large-scale civil strife and political tensions. Thus local language radio stations offer people a platform through which they can make their views known. Accordingly, they should be factual as inaccuracies and unverifiable claims have the potential to cause further harm.
2.0 The Radio Landscape in Kenya

Radio remains the most common and widely used media platform in Kenya (KARF, 2014). The first vernacular radio station was set up in 2000. Since then, the number has grown steadily (MCK, 2011). Today, there are over 100 vernacular stations with about 30 on air. Of these, Royal Media Services (RMS) has the largest comprising 11 radio stations while Kenya Broadcasting (KBC) has 5 stations. According to a BBC World Service Trust report, by 2007, vernacular radio stations constituted 27 per cent of the market share. The mainstream media contributed 33 per cent.3

This growth can be attributed to the liberalisation of media sector and the Constitution of Kenya 2010, in particular, articles 334 and 345. A law passed in 2004 liberalised the media industry. This paved the way for many other vernacular FM radio stations that targeted listeners from different ethnic communities. Some of these stations include: Kass FM and Chamge broadcast in Kalenjin, Kameme, Inooro and Coro in Kikuyu, Ramogi and Lake Victoria FM in Dholuo, Mulembe FM and West FM in Luhya, Mbaitu and Musyi FM in Kamba and Muuga in Meru.

Before the liberalisation, KBC offered a limited opportunity for local language broadcasting. Local languages shared approximately four hours daily, divided into two segments, for the approximately 18 local languages covered at the time. Today there are several FM radio stations dedicated mainly to broadcasts in the various local languages. Moreover, enhanced radio receivers in public transport and increased use of mobile phones that receive radio signals have also facilitated the growth in the radio sector6. In most cases, many of these vernacular stations are commercial ventures and target particular ethnic communities and other groups who understand the language.

Most of these vernacular FM radio stations focused on music and entertainment but this was to quickly shift to public discussions due to audience demand. The stations have therefore set aside much of their airtime to talkshows and phone-in programmes especially in the morning.

Overall, there are over 300 frequencies and licenses issues by Communication Authority of Kenya (CA). This including those that have not been utilized.7 In spite of the growing number of vernacular radio stations, their efficacy in terms of communication is still in doubt. Nonetheless, they remain part of Kenyan culture and ethnic identity. They are viable and commute-free channels of contact with the confines of the village and rural lives. They are an indispensable source of broadcast rich in local relevant content.

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2 Kameme was the first vernacular radio to be set up in 2000.
3 Orao, J. The Kenyan indigenous languages and the mass media: Challenges and opportunities, Stellenbosch papers in linguistics plus. 2009. Vol. 38. 77-86
4 It states that “Every person has the right to freedom to seek, receive or impart information or ideas; freedom of artistic creativity and academic freedom and freedom of scientific research”
5 It states that “Freedom and independence of electronic, print and all other types of media is guaranteed”
Additionally, it is important to point out that radio listenership continues to grow. By March 2014, there were over 4.4 million average weekly listeners (CA, 2014). Generally, vernacular radio stations compete with radio stations which have higher penetration in the urban areas both in business as well as content despite their differences in focus and language of broadcasting.

In terms of their role, vernacular radio is an important development agent. A 2011 report by MCK shows that editors and media owners acknowledged the essential role played by vernacular radio stations in rural areas because of their ability to reach a vast majority of the population who can speak out about issues affecting them. The Media Council of Kenya believes that vernacular stations can have a serious impact in society if effectively used. By broadcasting in the local language, vernacular stations can promote cohesion. In fact, morning talk shows provide audiences with a platform to share views over particular issues affecting them like alcoholism, crime, education etc. In other words, the platform offered by the stations is important to marginalised communities who can use it to talk about issues affecting them.

2.1 Listenership of vernacular radio stations in Kenya

Vernacular radio stations enjoy a wide reach and audience-share across the country despite the fact that they appeal mainly to communities that live in particular regions of Kenya. This means that some of the vernacular radio stations invest their operational infrastructure in the regions where their audiences are based. According to audience research data by the Kenya Audience research Foundation, some of the leading vernacular radio stations in terms of audience reach and share include Kameme, Inooro, Coro, Ramogi, Musyi, Kass and West FM.

Kikuyu based vernacular radio stations enjoy the highest audience in terms of reach and share partly because of the population proportionate sampling that is used by KARF in the longitudinal study.8 Besides, the Kikuyu contribute 21% of Kenya’s population, followed by Luhya 14%, Luo 13% and kalenjin 12%. This explains the listenership figures. In addition, vernacular radio excites a high followership and loyalty because of the nature of interactive programmes that are aired. The use of rich language (laden with ethnic metaphors, similes and other elements of oral language) brings out some of the discussions in a manner that borders between humor and grotesque imagery that audience are strongly attracted to.

The rise and continued rise of vernacular radio stations reach and share among its audience is an irreversible and inevitable with the impending digital migration and the establishment of counties. It is expected that some of the counties will adopt vernacular radio stations that will be considered as part of implementing article 94 and 95 of the County Government Act, 2012. The ability and inevitability of vernacular radio stations to reach niche audiences in various regions in Kenya has been exploited extensively by advertisers. This is especially because media houses are always on the lookout for new markets and audiences.

As indicated above, despite the growth in numbers and listenership, profes-

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8 http://worldpopulationreview.com/countries/kenya-population/
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Vernacular radio stations have proved that the most effective way of communicating with the grassroots is through local languages which audiences can understand and relate to. Besides, as many Kenyans cannot fluently in English and Kiswahili, local language stations remain their preferred choices. This truism perhaps informed Royal Media Service's investment in numerous local language stations.

The stations, media literacy and sensitization of audiences on the quality and character of call-in contributions.

Figure 1: Average Time (in hrs) spent per week Q4, 2013
Source: Kenya Audience Research foundation (2013)

Regional dominance and impact of vernacular radio stations in Kenya

Radio continues to be the leading media platform across all regions in Kenya due to its high penetration or access levels. Besides, as indicated above, there has also been a significant growth of vernacular radio stations which has increased the geographical footprint compared to other media. Statistics indicate that on average, a radio listener tunes in to four different channels in an average week. According to the Kenya Audience Research Foundation, rural and urban radio listeners tune in to the same number of radio stations in a week. Interestingly, those in rural areas spend one and a half hours more listening to radio than those in urban areas.
From the tables above, it is evident that various topographies have access to a number of vernacular radio stations. Citizen Radio leads in western Kenya largely due to the lingual and semantic variations among the Luhya community. This makes Kiswahili broadcasts more popular among consumers across the country.
BBC is the leading radio station in the North Eastern topography due largely to its Somali broadcasts. The area is mostly inhabited by the Somali ethnic community hence the high listenership. In areas like Central Kenya, it is unsurprising that Kameme and Inooro are the most popular stations. The radio stations broadcast in the Kikuyu language.

The assertions given above credence to the argument that loyalty is determined by the language of broadcasts. However, loyalty is also driven by its entertainment and non-disruptive nature given terms minimal attention is required when undertaking other activities. Moreover, radio gives people access to news cheaply compared to other media like newspapers.

2.2 Ownership of vernacular radio stations in Kenya

Many radio stations in Kenya are owned by media entrepreneurs and politicians (either directly or through proxies or shares) and business people. The same applies to vernacular radio stations. According to a publication by Internews titled *Factually True, Legally Untrue: Political and Media Ownership in Kenya*, some political bigwigs who have served in the country political regimes since independence own various radio stations. For example, Pili Pili FM is owned by Najib Balala, Kameme FM owned by Mediamax which is owned by the Kenyatta family, Sauti ya Pwani is owned by John Musyimi, and Sauti ya Mwananchi by Koigi wa Wamwere. Radio Salaam is associated with Yusuf Haji, Mbaitu FM linked is to Charity Ngilu, Radio Umoja and Radio Namlolwe are associated with the former Prime Minister Raila Odinga while Kass FM is associated with Deputy President William Ruto.

The ownership is driven by numerous factors. Arguments abound that politicians often take advantage of weak media ownership legal framework to own radio stations as strategic tools for political reasons. They particularly come in handy during campaign periods as they seek votes and support. Ownership means they can reduce their campaign expenses by using the stations to reach out to the electorate.

The direct involvement by politicians in the management of vernacular radio stations has been the source of concern in Kenya. This is based on the fact that political and proprietorial interests sometimes supersede professional and ethical requirements. Editorial independence is also often sacrificed. Because of their financial investments, they are almost in direct control of the operations of the stations. The independence of those who work in such environments is often compromised.

2.3 Impact of Vernacular Radio Stations: Socio-Economic and Political Perspectives

The proliferation of vernacular, community and local media in many sub-Saharan countries has had both positive and negative consequences. In terms of governance, for instance, community radio in Mali has led to more transparent and accountable management of public resources as they help expose corruption and bribery. 

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Generally, vernacular radio stations are involved in mass communication like any other mass media. Here they are supposed to carry out various functions including surveillance of the environment, correlation of parts of the society (interpretation), education and transmission of social change, persuasion, entertainment and mobilisation. In terms of health and educational gains, evidence from Madagascar, for instance, has shown that knowledge about HIV/AIDS, safe motherhood and child vaccination is higher among local radio listeners. In countries like Tanzania, radio dramas have helped significant numbers of couples adopt family planning methods.

Local radio can also act as a warning system in natural disasters, a messaging system for far-flung communities, a price-index for poor farmers, and a life-line giving vital information in humanitarian emergencies. It has also proven its worth in terms of fostering community cohesion, from urban youth radio in Senegal to peace radio in Northern Uganda, to township radio in South Africa. According to Howard (2002), vernacular radio stations, like other media, play an important role in the growth and development of the community and country by, for example, providing health awareness and information, education and entertainment. What’s more, radio stations have played positive roles in the development of democracy in Kenya.

By offering a platform for political discourse, through political discussions, phone-ins, interrogations and interviews with various public figures, radio has opened up the space for political debate and public engagement. In addition, civil society organisations now have their voices heard through such media platforms while the minority language speakers in Kenya have been accorded the opportunity to hear and contribute to debates in their mother tongue. This has promoted the culture of inclusive socio-economic and political discourses in society as even the illiterate can participate in discussions.

However, local radio can be a double-edged sword, used for negative purposes that, for instance, can undermine social cohesion and encourage violence by propagating messages of intolerance and disinformation that have the tendency to manipulate the public to resort to violence. Abdi and Deane (2008), for example, argue that FM stations were responsible for hate speech and ethnic prejudice that preceded the post-election violence of 2007/2008.

Various reports have detailed the negative consequences of some radio stations. For example, a report done by Kwamboka Oyaro argues that radio played a significant role in the post-election violence. She quotes one journalist as saying: “The ethnic hate our radio stations were propagating about those from outside their community audiences was unbelievable. The unfortunate thing is we let these callers speak vile and laughed about it”. Another local broadcaster said afterwards, “we took sides in the issues and we became sub-

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Europe.

11 Nurturing nationhood through peace media
jective, forgetting our professionalism tenets of objectivity and neutrality. In fact, this polarisation was so bad in the newsroom that some broadcast journalist refused to cover or read news that was not favourable to their candidates or party they supported.¹⁵

Despite the seemingly positive effects of the use of vernacular languages in local radio broadcasts, a number of questions regarding the usefulness of local languages in a rapidly developing world (with new terms in politics, economics, and every social sphere) still linger. Can they, for instance, be effective as means of communication in fast-paced global environments with regular developments and innovations? How can they cope with the dilemma of having to relay information about things and concepts for which the target language community might not have equivalent terminology?

2.4 Flaring tension through talk-shows and call in sessions

The expansion of political space and freedoms in Kenya has given politicians and others entrepreneurs the right to own various media platforms. While some did it for genuine reasons, others had hidden motives. Some did so with little understanding of the power the media possesses, and its ability to shape and influence public opinion. However, some who understood the strategic role of vernacular radio have sought to use it to advance their political interests. This is compounded by the fact that some of the broadcasters employed in the vernacular radio stations lack proper training and are often unaware of the power of their broadcasts. They often make light-hearted remarks that are sometimes offensive and provocative.

The use of obscure and metaphorical language rich meaning in vernacular language coupled with the contextualisation of discussions make vernacular radio stations very powerful incitement agents. A few untrained broadcasters in some of the vernacular radio stations also lack experience and are unable to respond appropriately to issues. They are often unable to contextualise and balance issues during live shows. Lack of or inadequate resources in some radio stations, increasing corporatism coupled with poor pay makes the vernacular radio stations unable to withstand pressure or courage to fend off wealthy guests intent on using such platforms to incite listeners or denigrate opponents.

Nonetheless, the tools of mass media including vernacular radio stations can be used to manage conflict, and promote peace and reconciliation in the country. This can be done by the media through Inculcation of a culture of respect for the sanctity of human life that restrains people from the use of violence as an instrument of resolving personal and community disputes. In essence, vernacular radio stations can offer ideal platforms for conflict-prone, marginalised, and rural and peri-urban populations to promote good and accountable governance and peace agenda.

2.5 Multi-ethnic variations and its impact on vernacular radio operations

Kenya is a multilingual state with more than 42 ethnic communities. It has two “official” languages namely Kiswahili, the national language and English which is the official language. To elucidate the symbolic role of the mass media in the indigenous languages, it is noteworthy that in this role the vernacular mass media can offer the indigenous language some prestige. The use of the local language and the airing of local language programmes give considerable prestige to the local/regional popular culture.

Listening to the FM stations in Kenya, one is confronted with numerous interactive shows that are on offer. The programming ranges from breakfast shows (with news and political commentaries and live call-ins) to those dealing with interesting social issues of the day. That these are undertaken in the indigenous languages, which for a long time had been condemned as being unfit for public communication, exemplifies the way the mass media have created new opportunities for collective participation. The increased role of the vernacular mass media can be read from the reactions to and accusations leveled against their role in the early 2008 ethnic violence in Kenya.

2.6 Balancing freedom of expression and constitutional limitations in vernacular radio stations discussions

Article 33 of the Kenyan Constitution protects each individual’s freedom of expression. This means people have the right to seek, receive or impart information or ideas, freedom of artistic creativity, academic freedom as well as freedom of scientific research. However, paragraph (2) of Article 33 limits freedom of expression by stating that it does not extend to: propaganda for war, incitement to violence, hate speech or advocacy of hatred that constitutes ethnic incitement, vilification of others or incitement to cause harm. In addition, such freedom of expression, under Article 27 (4) [1], must be exercised with respect to the rights and reputation of others.

The role of the Kenyan media in promoting access to information and promoting freedom of expression can never be understated. In addition, the media helps to shape public opinion when it is used in open, free and unbridled communication. However, there is a thin line between freedom of expression and inciteful and hate speech. Nonetheless, care must be taken to ensure that what may be considered hate speech actually meet the threshold of hate speech to avoid compromising the exercise of freedom of expression in vernacular radio stations. This issue has emerged in a number of instances where people are scared of expressing their opinions. The memories of the deleterious 2007/2008 post-election violence further exacerbate that fear. But such can be mitigated by offering advice on what constitutes hate speech. This way, the callers can express their views without engaging in hate speech.

---

Table 3: Profile of vernacular radio stations monitored

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RADIO STATION</th>
<th>LANGUAGE OF BROADCASTING</th>
<th>SOME AREAS OF COVERAGE</th>
<th>START OF OPERATIONS</th>
<th>MODEL OF FINANCING</th>
<th>AUDIENCE REACH (KARF, 2013)</th>
<th>AUDIENCE SHARE (KARF, 2013)</th>
<th>OWNER-SHIP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kass FM</td>
<td>Kalenjin</td>
<td>Rift valley regions</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Advertising</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>Kass Media Group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Nairobi Western regions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kameme</td>
<td>Kikuyu</td>
<td>Nairobi Narok Meru</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>Advertising</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>MediaMax Limited</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Nakuru Nyeri</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ramogi FM</td>
<td>Luo</td>
<td>Nyanza Siaya Rift Valley</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>Advertising</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>Royal Media Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egesa FM</td>
<td>Kisii</td>
<td>Nyanza regions Rift Valley</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>Advertising</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>Royal Media Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mulembe FM</td>
<td>Luhya</td>
<td>Western region Rift valley region</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Advertising</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>2.7%</td>
<td>Royal Media Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radio Rahma</td>
<td>Kiswahili</td>
<td>Coastal regions</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Advertising</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muuga</td>
<td>Meru</td>
<td>Meru Maua Nkubu Isiolo Embu</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Advertising</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
<td>Royal Media Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Athiani Radio</td>
<td>Kamba</td>
<td>Kibwezi Machakos Kitui &amp; Makueni</td>
<td>Advertising</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2.4%</td>
<td>Royal Media Services</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Kass FM
Kass FM broadcasts in Kalenjin targeting audiences in the 20-45+ age bracket. It reaches Nairobi and its environs,\(^\text{17}\) Rift valley including Eldoret, Nakuru, Bomet, Narok, Baringo, Kapenguria, Gilgil, Bomet, Litein and Kericho. Currently, Kass FM is among the most popular radio stations in the Rift Valley Province. It also broadcasts in Washington DC and London through some sister stations. Kenyans in the Diaspora, particularly those in U.S and UK, are able to follow local affairs and news from its Nairobi station. Kenyans are able to listen to broadcasts from Washington DC and London. Most of the journalists at Kass FM are degree, diploma and certificate holders and can therefore be considered qualified to hold their positions.

Radio Ramogi
Ramogi broadcasts in Dholuo, targeting audience residing mainly in Nyanza, the Lake Victoria region and parts of South Nyanza.\(^\text{18}\) People speaking Luo may also

\(^\text{17}\) [http://kassfm.co.ke/home/](http://kassfm.co.ke/home/)

be found in other major towns in the country. The station covers Nairobi and its environs on 107.1FM, Rift Valley on 95.4FM, Nyanza on 107.6FM and Siaya on 98.6FM.

The station claims that their programme format is simple, unpretentious, fun and interactive. The station has various programmes like interactive talk shows, news, sports, and plays Benga and Lingala music.

Mulembe FM
Mulembe FM broadcasts in Luhya. It targets the Luhya, in the age bracket of 20-45+ years, residing in both rural and urban areas. It broadcasts to the entire Western Province on 89.6FM, Rift-Valley on 94.0FM and Nairobi on 97.9FM. Western Province, which is the home of Mulembe FM, is a densely populated area hence the station reaches out to several people. The target audience includes both male and female aspiring for information for socio-economic development (predominantly medium and small scale agricultural producers). They form the mass market. The station claims on its website that it has lively programmes seeking to empower its listeners.

Egesa FM
Egesa FM broadcasts in ‘Ekegusii’, the language of the Kisii community who live predominantly in the southern part of Nyanza. Besides Nyanza, it targets people in Rift Valley and Nairobi where it broadcasts on 94.6FM, and 103.2FM respectively. It is the only 24-hour Kisii station. The station claims to be the voice of the people, championing their rights and keeping the community and those surrounding them together. The primary target may be categorised as middle to lower social class residing both in the rural and urban areas, while the secondary target is the upper class. The station claims to provide a rich menu of sports, news, commentaries, business features, vernacular music and interactive talk shows.

Muuga FM
Muuga FM, broadcasting in Kimeru, has been in operation since October 2005. It covers Meru and the surrounding areas on 88.9FM. It also reaches Maua, Chogoria, Nkubu, Embu, Isiolo, Mwea and Nyambene. The Embu are also conversant with the language hence are able to tune in to the station. The primary target audience is the middle to lower social class aged 24-45+ years, residing both in the rural and urban areas. According information on its website, the station claims that its programming is mature, informative and skewed towards the lifestyle of the audience. It provides news, interactive shows, entertainment (comedy, music and theatre).

Kameme FM
Kameme is owned by MediaMax which also owns K24 and The People newspaper. The company is owned by the Kenyatta family. Kameme FM went on air in 2000 as the first private vernacular radio station in Kenya. Most of those working at the station are degree and diploma holders.

19 http://www.mulembefm.co.ke/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=1&Itemid=61
3.0 Quantitative Analysis

As indicated in a 2011 Media Council of Kenya report, most of the vernacular radio stations run four to six call-in shows per day with breakfast shows being the most popular.22 The stations often start their shows with prayers, then newspaper analysis and at some point engage the audiences in topical discussions in which presenters invite guest and callers to contribute.

A total of 86 breakfast show items were analysed over the period of the study. Ramogi (3) and Athiani (4) had the least number of shows. Kass had 13, Egesa 15, Kameme 14, Rahma 17 and Muuga nine.

Radio Rahma, Egesa FM and Kass FM were among the leading in the frequency of discussions analysed in this study. This is because the vernacular radio stations chose to focus extensively on the issues that were being monitored.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FORMAT</th>
<th>FREQUENCY</th>
<th>PERCENTAGE</th>
<th>VALID PERCENTAGE</th>
<th>CUMULATIVE PERCENTAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Talk-shows</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>83.7</td>
<td>83.7</td>
<td>83.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviews</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>16.3</td>
<td>16.3</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4: Format of discussion analysed
As Table 4 above shows, most of the discussions were presented as talk shows (83.7 per cent). Comparatively, only slightly more than 16 per cent were interviews.

And as Figure 3 below shows, most of the hosts were male, with only a small fraction being female. This shows that a lot still has to be done to increase the number of female presenters. In fact, a report done by the Media Council in 2011 also indicated that only a small number of women hosted the shows.\textsuperscript{23}

\textsuperscript{23} In 2011 performance of the vernacular radio station, Media Council of Kenya monitoring reports covered for

\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{figure3}
\caption{Gender of radio discussion show}
\end{figure}

\begin{table}
\begin{tabular}{|c|c|c|c|c|}
\hline
Valid & Frequency & Percent & Valid Percent & Cumulative Percent \\
\hline
Male & 168 & 64.1 & 64.1 & 64.1 \\
Female & 94 & 35.8 & 35.8 & 100.0 \\
Total & 262 & 100.0 & 100.0 & \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\caption{Gender composition of callers}
\end{table}
Almost two thirds or 64% of callers in the vernacular radio discussions were male while 35% were female. This indicates that the male callers still dominate the discussions.

### 3.1 Topics of discussions

During the period under review, land issues were the least discussed. Comparatively, *Saba Saba* was the topic of choice contributing about 65 per cent of the total show time. General insecurity stood at 18.6 per cent while *Mpeketoni* was 14 per cent.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Radio station</th>
<th>Saba Saba</th>
<th>Mpeketoni attacks</th>
<th>Land issues</th>
<th>General insecurity</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ramogi</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kass</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egesa</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mulembe FM</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kameme</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rahma</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muuga FM</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Athiani FM</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>56</strong></td>
<td><strong>12</strong></td>
<td><strong>2</strong></td>
<td><strong>16</strong></td>
<td><strong>86</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6: Frequency distribution of topical issues discussed in vernacular radio
Some of the topics that were discussed extensively in most of the radio stations analysed included Saba Saba and Mpeketoni attacks. Kameme had the highest number of Saba Saba discussions while Radio Rahma had the highest frequency of Mpeketoni attacks.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Comment, conjecture and fact</th>
<th>Valid</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>83</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not applicable</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7: Differentiating comments, conjecture and factual contributions in vernacular radio discussions

As indicated in the table above, 59% of the discussions analysed tried to differentiate comment, conjecture and factual contributions on the various issues. This happened in form of disclaimers and corrections by programme hosts. However, 24% of the discussions allowed non-bridled discussions on various issues with no clear guidelines from the host on what constituted caller comments and facts. Generally, the hosts should try to inform the listeners about the issues and events as they occur and interpret reality in a way that contributes to constructive dialogue about issues of public concern. Just like journalists, they should be concerned with balance, awareness, public service interests and accuracy.

We can illustrate the discussions above with a number of examples in which it was not clear whether it was conjecture or factual commentary. For instance, a caller said:

“Saba Saba rallies organised by CORD are illegal and are meant to destabilise the government of Uhuru [Kenyatta] and [William] Ruto ... the opposition plans to take over power through mass action.

They should stop thinking they can take the government through the back door.”

Notably, most of the discussions that were found not to differentiate between factual commentary and unverifiable statement were those in which the hosts/presenters were not in total control of the call-in shows or where the proper context and background information was not given. Consider the following statement from a caller commenting on land issues:

“... The land problem in Kenya is persistent because a water thief was appointed to manage land issues. If you cannot manage water, how can you manage the Ministry of Land which has much bigger challenges?”

3.2 Accusations and blame game in discussions

The sensitivity of some of the discussions like Mpeketoni, land issues and general insecurity required the journalist/radio talk-show hosts to be in total control of the discussions. Talk shows
hosting such sensitive issues should be aware that unsubstantiated claims can have serious repercussions. It is thus important that the radio stations adhere to journalistic tenets, particularly accuracy.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Blame and accusation in discussions</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valid</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>31.4</td>
<td>31.4</td>
<td>31.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>64.0</td>
<td>64.0</td>
<td>95.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not applicable</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8: Baseless accusations in radio stations discussions

As the table above shows, about a third or 31.4% of the shows analysed contained unsubstantiated claims. Almost two thirds (64%) were clean. Although this shows that the stations have made great attempts to provide credible information, they still face the challenge of reigning in rogue guests who may use them as platforms to engage in falsity and hate speech. Considering that they wield considerable influence in society, such claims may have serious consequences in society. Accordingly, it is important to ensure that guests are not only informed of what is expected of them but also asked to use palatable language and not express hatred and offensive views.

To take an example, a recording of a contribution demonstrates total disregard for decorum. To make matters worse, the guest was the MP from Starehe in Nairobi talking about the Mpeketoni attacks. In the exchanges, the MP accuses the CORD leader of complicity and calls him a liar.

“Some politicians from the CORD have been involved in planning and executing the Mpeketoni attacks so that they can destabilise the government. They want to make this government look like a failure. This is unacceptable and we will take action and arrest all those concerned.

Another guest said:

“... we must tell the truth. Most of the casualties were not people from, Lamu County. They came and grabbed land and were assisted by the [Jomo] Kenyatta government when he was president ... so the killings you saw in Mpeketoni are right to some degree because the weak people of Lamu are reacting because their voices cannot be heard.”

Such statements are not only offensive but are injurious to the reputation of opposition leaders and others.
3.3 Are the discussions factual and accurate based on the current circumstances?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valid</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>67.4</td>
<td>67.4</td>
<td>67.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>12.8</td>
<td>12.8</td>
<td>80.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not applicable</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>19.8</td>
<td>19.8</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 9: Factual and accurate discussions in vernacular radio stations

More than 67% of the discussions and interviews in vernacular radio stations were factual and accurate while 12.8% were adjudged to contain information that was not factual and accurate. Even though the rate of inaccuracy is small, there is need to ensure that there is little room for unsubstantiated claims. Given the example of Rwanda, it is always important to ensure discussions are clean to forestall dangers of such expressions contributing to strife and even violence. Consider the following statement, for example:

“MPs sacked Nancy Barasa because of the tyranny of numbers which has been used in shielding those committing crimes. They sacked Nancy Barasa and not Anne Waiguru. You can see how people from Central Kenya are protecting their own. They ‘finish’ others and protect their own.”

What is clear from the above vitriolic statement is that it is inaccurate and offensive. Nancy Barasa, the former Deputy Chief Justice resigned after a commission appointed by then President Mwai Kibaki recommended her removal from office for assaulting a security guard at the Village Market.

In another example, a discussion on Radio Rahma called Sabalkheri on issues of radicalisation with reference to Mpeketoni attacks, clearly failed to observe accuracy and fairness. A caller, for example, said:

“... When some of the things are happening at the Coast especially in Mpeketoni, we should understand that it is because Muslims are hated and mistreated by this government. We are seen as uneducated people who do not deserve anything ... this is why some of us are taking up arms and fighting outsiders. Why should they cry like babies simply because we are trying to make ourselves heard? We will continue to show our dissatisfaction whether violently or not?”

Even though the comment above was aired, the hosts did not take time to correct it. This may give the impression that it is true.
Vernacular radio stations need to examine long term causes and consequences of conflicts such as cattle rustling when reporting.
3.4 Are discussions held in a manner that is non-conducive for national harmony, amity and peace?

It is evident from the table above that some discussions (8%) threaten cohesion, amity and peace. While it may be difficult to identify statements or words that may contribute to ethnic tensions, sometimes radio stations offer space to people whose assertions may be offensive. Consider the following statement, for example:

“... We want to tell those who think they can bring down the government through Saba Saba that we are in the control seat. Those people from the lake have been known to be hecklers and ‘stone-throwers’. Tell them this government of Uhuru and Ruto cannot be brought down by small stones ... Saba Saba will fail and Luos will go cry at the Tom Mboya monument”

A caller on Mulembe FM was also captured saying: A Kikuyu will never vote for anybody who is a non-kikuyu, they want to eat alone ... when it is their turn to support others, they flee from you. That’s the behaviour of a hyena.

Article 11 of the Code of Conduct states that commentary shall not be broadcast in a manner that is likely to inflame passions, aggravate the tension or accentuate the strained relations between communities concerned.

3.5 Background of studio guests

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Background of guest</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Politicians</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>51.2</td>
<td>51.2</td>
<td>51.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scholars</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>55.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experts</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>25.6</td>
<td>25.6</td>
<td>81.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Man/woman on street</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>17.4</td>
<td>17.4</td>
<td>98.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other guest</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 11: Affiliation of guests invited to the studio
From the evidence above, politicians were the most invited guests (51.2%) to studio discussions. Experts came in second with 25.6% while ordinary people were invited 17.4% of the time. It is of course common knowledge that guests can influence discussions. At the same time, however, such guests have become critical to radio broadcasts as they offer a plurality of opinion, information, and even sometimes expert help. Despite this assertion, it is important to choose guests wisely given that sometimes they can be the source of hateful and offensive sentiments.

3.6 Contextual reporting and discussions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contextual reporting and discussions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not applicable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 12: Contextual reporting and discussions in vernacular radio stations

Sixty two per cent of the discussions and interviews analysed had contextual reporting. Contextual reporting means the hosts focus on the big picture and provide context for other news. Contextual discussions are often explanatory in nature, sometimes appearing beside conventional stories to complement the dry, ‘just the facts’ versions of the day’s discussions. They are important in guiding the call-in participants to understand what their contributions are and how they can constructively express their views without being antagonistic.

A good example is the programme in Egesa FM called *Boka boka* (literally *Wake up! Wake up!*) This is a morning show held daily from Monday to Friday. The show gave a proper context on the Saba Saba discussions and gave listeners and callers the topic, the historical background of the protests, and the context in which the issues were discussed. The show explained the historical context of Saba Saba and the essence of the CORD rally. For example, the station played clips of the former prime minister’s speech calling for national dialogue and subsequent threats to hold Saba Saba protests, the president’s dialogue acceptance speech at Nyayo National Stadium on Madaraka day as well as the Deputy President’s refusal to accede to opposition parties’ demands. This contextual material was important especially for participants who did not have background information.

Many of those monitored also gave contextual reporting of the topics before opening up the discussions. This ensured that callers made relevant and appropriate contributions that focused on the issues without the violation on the Code of Conduct.
3.7 Does the discussion seek to challenge negative stereotypes that can contribute to escalated animosity?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Challenge stereotypes</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valid</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>23</td>
<td>46.7</td>
<td>27.1</td>
<td>27.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>20.7</td>
<td>41.2</td>
<td>68.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not applicable</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>31.4</td>
<td>31.8</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>98.8</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing System</td>
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<td>1.2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 13: Discussions that challenge stereotypes in discussions

Slightly over 46% of the talk-shows and interview discussions challenged common stereotypes while 20.7% did not. Even though only about quarter of those surveyed did not challenge the stereotypes, the power of radio stations to manipulate people’s attitudes and opinions means the stations have to think critically about their capacity to challenge people’s viewpoints. People organise their knowledge about the world by sorting and simplifying received information. Such information may form the basis of formulation of stereotypes which may impact relations between people from different backgrounds.

In a programme on Mulembe FM called Mununjiro hosted by Haggai Sanya and Omari wa Bakuli, one caller made the following remarks:

“This government has not given us any bread ... the government has refused to give the Luhya community jobs and some of our people are being sacked. We have always been shoved aside when sharing the spoils ... they say we can only be house helps and watchmen. Our leaders are also sleeping and eating and have forgotten those they are supposed to serve. We as the Luhya community must strategise.”

The hosts did not intervene to correct those perceptions.

On Ramogi FM’s discussion programme Wach awacha, a caller made the following statement:

“Saba Saba should go on as CORD has planned it. Even if put a thousand policemen on standby, we shall go to Uhuru park. We are fearless and we will match to State House and claim that which is ours. They stole our votes and they will not steal our freedom to do Saba Saba. You see the way most of their people were killed in Mpeketoni ... it’s because they were cursed when they removed Jaramogi from power ... now they are paying for their deeds!”

It is noteworthy that despite the gravity of such accusations and comments, the station and host did not intervene to stop it.
3.8 Do the talk-show/interview discussion emphasis or encourage reconciliation among hostile groups/parties?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reconciliation</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valid</td>
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<td>35</td>
<td>40.7</td>
<td>40.7</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>31.4</td>
<td>72.1</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not applicable</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>27.9</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 14: Does the talk show encourage reconciliation among hostile groups?

As the table above indicates, 35% of the discussions analysed encouraged reconciliation and dialogue among people from different groups and factions while 27% did not. It thus was evident that some of the vernacular radio stations tried their best to bring various personalities, groups and factions together in what may be called constructive dialogues on issues that were being discussed.

The presenters indicated that people should respect others’ opinions. Some of the presenters and radio hosts kept reminding the callers about the need to be mindful of their words and language. For example, one presenter constantly reminded people:

“kumbuka oli kano kali maoni koo seka-li ka mulembe fm tawe nono khwenya muchango eli positive.” (Literally translated: remember that these are your own views and not those of Mulembe FM so make responsible and positive remarks.”

To encourage reconciliation among people from different backgrounds and persuasions, the talk-show hosts should seek the truth, be fair in allocation of talk time and maintain professional integrity. The hosts further need to test the accuracy of information they present as preliminary introduction in the programmes. They should reject and avoid deliberate distortion of issues by their callers and cut short some of those who might want to impose their opinions and views on others.

3.9 Do the talk-show/interviews identify underlying interests while asking the tough questions and getting out the real message beyond leaders’ interests?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tough/critical questions</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valid</td>
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<td>34</td>
<td>39.5</td>
<td>39.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>37.2</td>
<td>76.7</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not applicable</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>23.3</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 15: Tough/critical questions and satisfying listeners’ interest in talk shows
34% of the discussions in vernacular radio stations require diversity, spontaneity and flexibility. There are no clear rules on how to constructively discuss issues that have the potential to escalate conflict. However, it is difficult to make issues that may breed conflict interesting. While discussions should allow callers to ask critical questions, there should be limits to what can or cannot be asked.

During the monitoring period, some of the general tough/critical questions that came up in many discussions were:

i. *What is the government doing over the Mpeketoni killings?*

ii. *Why was the government slow in reacting to the calls for help during the Mpeketoni killings?*

iii. *What is the basis for the government’s claims that CORD leaders perpetrated the Mpeketoni attacks?*

iv. *Has the government resolved land issues?*

v. *How would the government handle the planned Saba Saba rallies?*

### 4.0 General breaches noted during the monitoring period

Some of the breaches that were noted during monitoring period include:

- **Article 11 on covering ethnic, religious and sectarian conflict**
- **Article 1 on accuracy and fairness**
- **Article 15 on gender non-discrimination**
- **Article 3 on integrity with regards to clear labelling of opinion, facts and commentary**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Breaches</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
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<td>72.1</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 16: Breaches noted to the code of conduct for the practice of journalism**

Almost 28% of the talk-show discussions and interviews breached the code of conduct for the practice of journalism in Kenya. Most of them (72.1%) did not breach the code. The breaches noted relate to covering ethnic, religious and sectarian conflict, accuracy and fairness, and gender discrimination, among others.

Some of the breaches that were noted in various discussions include the following:

i. **Violation on covering ethnic, religious and sectarian conflict**

The Code of Conduct for the practice of journalism states that news
reports or commentaries shall not be broadcast in a manner likely to inflame passions, aggravate tensions or accentuate the strained relations between communities concerned.

A caller on Radio Rahma’s Sabalkheri programme clearly illustrates the provision by stating that:

“... We must understand that even if the government claims that CORD is responsible for the killings in Lamu, it is clear that the majority of those killed were from one tribe, the Kikuyu. So they [kikuyus] should blame themselves for invading other people’s land ... It is sad that the government has chosen to politicise this issue, while Uhuru knows very well why his people are being killed. Let’s speak the truth.”

ii. Violations on accuracy and fairness

A person subject to this Act, while free to be partisan, shall distinguish clearly in their reports between comment, conjecture and fact. It further states that a person subject to this Act shall present news fairly and impartially, placing primary value on significance and relevance. A person subject to this Act shall seek to understand the diversity of their community and inform the public without bias or stereotype and present a diversity of expressions, opinions, and ideas in context.

In one of the discussions in Athiani FM, callers made the following remarks:

“Security and alcohol are two things that the government should address ... the government is responsible for the brewing of illegal alcohol since they know citizens brew and sell it to people illegally. Why don’t they take action against them? We know they are often bribed to keep quiet. We know that county government gets revenue and bribes from illegal brewing ... even the MCAs and chiefs ... I know some who used to be very thin. They are now potbellied, ... It’s because of the bribes.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><em>Main Subjects</em></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Count</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Politician</th>
<th>Main Subjects</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Victims of violence</td>
<td>Man/woman on street</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radio</td>
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<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kass</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egesa</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mulembe FM</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kameme</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rahma</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muuga FM</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Athiani FM</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 17: Main subjects and focus of discussions
4.1 Tonality of discussions undertaken in vernacular radio shows

Almost 34 per cent of the discussions analysed were positive while 17.4% were negative. 48.8% of the discussions were neutral.

Positive discussions use non-inflammatory language while allowing healthy discussions and engagement between guests, hosts and callers. The discussions encourage peace, national cohesion and dialogue in seeking resolutions. Negative discussions use inflammatory language while allowing unhealthy discussions and engagement between guests, hosts and also callers. The discussions involve bitter exchanges that can contribute to the flare up of emotions in listeners. Neutral stories are neither positive nor negative. But the dwelt on the subject objectively and plainly.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tone of discussion</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valid Positive</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>33.7</td>
<td>33.7</td>
<td>33.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valid Negative</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>17.4</td>
<td>17.4</td>
<td>51.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valid Neutral</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>48.8</td>
<td>48.8</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 18: Tone of discussion

The tonality of discussions in vernacular radio stations should be guided by article 12 of the Code of Conduct which states that views or comments on ethnic, religious or sectarian dispute shall be published or broadcast after proper verification of facts and presented with due caution and restraint in a manner which is conducive to the creation of an atmosphere congenial to national harmony, amity and peace. It further states that articles or broadcasts with the potential to exacerbate communal trouble shall be avoided.

4.2 Did the discussions in vernacular radios seek to find answers and solutions?

As the chart below shows, 58% of the vernacular radio stations discussions sought to find solutions to various issues. 20% did not.

According to the normative and social responsibility principles, the media ought to alter the basic conditions that promote insecurity and turmoil. By reporting on underlying causes of such problems, the media helps find solutions to current challenges facing society. It does this while encouraging dialogue and challenging ideas that may cause conflict. For this reason, vernacular FM stations have been a force for democratisation given their free-ranging studio discussions, phone-ins, political discussions and interviews. They have helped expand the political space and given people a platform through which to express their feelings about goings-on in society.
BELOW: Vernacular radio should be sensitive to ethical principles when reporting on cultural activities.
Qualitative analysis

Hate speech

There was no hate speech in the programmes monitored. This may be attributed to measures that have been put in place by respective vernacular radio stations in Kenya to prevent airing of hate speech and the intense training and consultative forums organised by media practitioners, Media Council of Kenya and other stakeholders working to promote media professionalism.

Hate speech as used in the monitoring report was adopted and expanded from the Code of Conduct for the Practice of Journalism in Kenya to include terms which refer to a whole spectrum of negative discourse, stretching from hate or prejudice and incitement to hatred. Hate speech is designed to degrade, intimidate, or incite violence or prejudicial action against a person or group of people based on their race, gender, age, ethnicity, nationality, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, language ability, moral or political views, socio-economic class, occupation or appearance, mental capacity and any other distinction-liability. In addition to the above, most media houses did not breach the Code of Conduct for the practice of journalism as relates to hate speech.

Nature of discussions on vernacular radio stations monitored

Vernacular radio stations highlight issues that directly affect those groups of people who understand the language used in the broadcasts. For example Muuga FM on 3 and 4 June 2014 focused mostly on the ban of miraa (khat) by the British government. Many participants challenged Kenya’s president to seek alternative market for their products.

Elsewhere, Kass FM on its part focused on cattle rustling among residents of West Pokot and Baringo. While land, Mpeketoni, and insecurity were the focus of this study, some notable issues discussed included measures to eliminate poverty, devolution, budgeting in the counties and community welfare.

Gender Discrimination

Article 16 of the Code of Conduct for the Practice of Journalism in Kenya states, “women and men should be treated fairly and equally as news subjects and sources”. In a majority of the shows monitored, however, most contributors were men. Fair gender portrayal is a professional and ethical aspiration, similar to respect for accuracy, fairness and honesty. It is the other side of the coin that says women need to be more present at higher levels of the news business, both at work and in the unions. In a world where hard news is still mainly reported and presented by male journalists, there is need to promote gender equality. This equality is not just a women’s issue. Everyone benefits from the elimination of gender discrimination.

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25 According to the Media Council of Kenya Act 2013, careful account shall be taken of the possible effect upon the ethnic or racial group concerned, and on the population as a whole and the changes in public attitudes as to what is and what is not acceptable when using racist or negative terms when referring to some people.


27 Article 25 of the code of conduct for the practice of journalism in Kenya, Media Council Act, 2013.
Responsible journalism/ good moderation skills

Journalists have a duty to present factual information to their audiences and to moderate discussions in a responsibly acceptable manner. On 7 July 2014, Ramogi FM invited listeners to discuss Saba Saba, a day when the CORD Coalition held a much publicised rally in Nairobi to demand for reforms in government. The morning Wach awacha show host Ben Okelo did not hesitate to correct uninformed views from participants. When a caller claimed that a power blackout experienced in Kisumu town on that day was a ploy to keep the locals in the dark about the CORD Saba Saba events, the host was quick to correct that misinformation by saying that blackouts were common in Kisumu.

On 8 July 2014, the station discussed the impact of CORD's 13 point agenda announced in the Saba Saba rally. While some callers claimed the points were ‘rules’, the presenter reminded them that they were mere points and demands made by CORD.

Similarly, on Mulembe FM, a host Omari wa Bakuli was adamant that callers had to stick to the rules and allowed them a maximum of one minute to make their remarks. He also asked callers to delimit their contributions to security and politics. Such control of discussions means callers are unable to digress to other issues.

Accuracy and Fairness

Journalists must always ensure the accuracy of their information, and strive to be fair. Fairness means giving equal opportunities to those mentioned a story. Callers and guests should never be used to exaggerate the importance of a story. Hosts and stations should examine the motives of callers and guests and ensure that their own feelings and emotions do not cloud their reports or determine which elements of the story/discussions they highlight. They also need to think carefully about the language and tone they use to ensure that it doesn’t give an inaccurate and unfair representation of the facts.

Let’s consider the discussions on Ramogi FM. The presenter gives inaccurate Information and takes sides:

“Awacho ni awuon korka tok yiero, iyudo ka mar bar wabar en nobiro kod Koffi Annan manokelonwa kwe ... Bang’ kanewakalo katiba iyudo ni jomokao telo kendo bang’e, jomanoyombi kaka ng’ama noyudo kom ker noyombo jomoko to kendo ng’ama noyombo machiegni ne en Raila Amolo Odinga mana machiegni gi million abich gi wiye, mano tiende ni en ng’at ma oganda ohero to katiba ineno ka ok omiye afis moro amora.”

Literally translated: “ Kofi Annan masteredminded the grand coalition government which brought peace in the country. After the previous election, people who were defeated formed the Government. Raila Odinga garnered more than five million votes ... he was elected president. He was the people’s president ... the problem though is that there is no office for the people’s President.”

In addition to the issues above, journalists should always critically interrogate issues. They should not broadcast events or speeches without asking critical questions. On the 18 July 2014 morning show on Kameme FM on the Mpeketoni attacks, the presenter claimed the attacks were ethnically motivated. The presenter seemed ignorant of the situation. Was there evidence linking the clashes to ethnicity? Who provided
the reports? Was it a credible source?

On 19 June 2014, the Starehe MP Maina Kamanda linked CORD leader Raila Odinga to the ‘ethnic cleansing’ in Mpeketoni attacks without providing proof. The presenter did not challenge the legislator to prove his claim.

Egesa FM has also fallen into the ethnic trap. On a day when the president was visiting counties in Kisii and Nyamira counties, the presenters asked callers to state their needs. This was an issue of regional concern.

Breach of article 11 of the Code of Conduct on covering ethnic, religious and sectarian conflict states that news, views or comments on ethnic, religious or sectarian disputes shall not be published. However, in one of the comments, the host allows one of the guests to make the comment below:

“Hata tuseme nini hakuna chenye atasaidia, maisha ni ngumu still, wacha aende awadanganye waKisii kwa sababu ni wajinga tu, wakubali kila kitu.”

Literally translated: “No matter what we say, he can’t help us in any way … life is still tough, let him go and like to Kisii who will agree on everything because they are stupid!”

On the issue of national dialogue demanded by CORD, Mulembe FM could be considered guilty of promoting ethnic animosity. After agreeing to issues of national dialogue, a presenter on the station said: “Omusebe olarukanga sibala siefwe sino anya khucompromiser Raila. Nono khafukile dialogue mu public.” (Raila might be compromised by the Kikuyu leading our country … let him accept this dialogue in public!)

In another show, a guest is allowed to make an unsubstantiated statement about party politics and their support base. He is quoted saying: “We rebranded our party from Maendeleo Democratic Party to Maendeleo Democratic Movement because we want it all over the Luhya region. In Kenya, parties are tribal. The Kalenjin have URP, the Kamba have WIPER, the Luo have ODM and the Kikuyu have TNA. This is ethnicity of the highest order.”

He went on to say: “We did a research and found out that Luhyas votes should be 4.5 million, and the kikuyu 4.6 million …”

Even though the host stopped the caller and warned against making such claims, he should not have allowed him to continue. The presenter should instead have laid the ground rulings that callers were expected to adhere to. This was not done prior to the start of the programme as would be expected.

Support or otherwise for particular topics varied across vernacular radio stations

It is evident from the study that the support or otherwise of topical issues depended on a radio station’s listenership base. For instance, most of the callers to vernacular radio stations in areas where CORD had strong followership in the previous elections supported the issue of Saba Saba while strongly condemning the Mpeketoni killings.

They blamed the government for the killings. This is an indication that politics influences people’s views on radio. Regardless, it is important that the moderator or host be in control of the discussions. This should ensure balance and accuracy of opinions.
Discussions with editors and Radio station managers in vernacular radio stations

**Possible causes of ethical violations that are witnessed in vernacular radio stations**

Vernacular radio stations in Kenya face numerous challenges. According to managers and editors interviewed for this study, the stations either do not have or do not adhere to editorial guidelines. In addition, they have a number of untrained staff. Other challenges they face include:

- Lack of self-regulation/internal control mechanism
- Lack of well-trained or professional staff who respect ethical requirements
- Intense commercialization leading to unprofessional and unethical behavior
- Interference from media owners

**Challenges of managing content in vernacular radio stations**

The editors and managers interviewed said managing such stations was complex. They cited the following as some of the reasons for the management challenges they face:

- Lack of or Inadequate resources, and inadequate capacity
- Audience demands that are unpalatable to greater society tastes
- Poor planning

- Lack of creativity and innovation resulting from lack of resources and capacity, and growing corporatism
- Interference by some media owners in terms of dictating what content to be aired
- Lack of modern technology to assist in quality content production and management

**Interference from the media owners in content production**

Editors and radio station managers agree that media owners often interfere with the running and management of the stations. These affects:

- Programming. This includes which productions to fund, which ones to air and when.
- Employment. Sometimes owners influence who to employ regardless of their qualifications and competence. In turn, this affects production of content.
- Day to day operations and management of the stations. Sometimes media owners, their relatives, associates and friends interfere with the management of the stations, affecting ethical and professional decision-making in the newsroom
- Management decisions. Some owners (particularly those who are politicians) make decisions based on their political beliefs and/or affiliations with little regard to professionalism.
Role of vernacular radio in development communication and enhancing democracy in Kenya

- They have opened up the democratic space for dialogue and engagement with rural populations.

- They have enhanced the spirit of public participation as enshrined in the Constitution and laws, particularly the County Government Act of 2012.

- They have given people an alternative space for interrogation of public decisions, and avenues through which to hold to account their leaders.

- They have helped to preserve/promote culture and diversity, music and other cultural practices.

- They have minority and marginalised communities to participate in public life and dialogues.

- They have contributed to socio-economic development.

Impact of remuneration and work environment on ethical competence of vernacular radio stations

- Editors and managers say that poor pay compromises professionalism, and promotes unethical practices.

- Some journalists now double up as country government workers. This comprises their independence and important tenets like objectivity, impartiality and fairness. This negatively impacts not only their integrity but also that of the media. This also means they are unable to sometimes adhere to the provisions of the code of conduct of journalists.

- Some radio stations do not have the resources and financial capability to operate independently. Some politicians, business people and others are known to finance the operations of journalists and this compromises their independence and quality of work.

Vernacular radio stations and their capacity to incite Kenyans

Editors and managers interviewed agree that vernacular radio has been known to deliberately and knowingly incite violence. They say this happens when they directly advocate violence against “others” and disseminate hate messages. This was evidence prior and during the post-election violence of 2007/2008. To address such concerns, editors and managers say they have taken some actions to forestall such happenings. These include:

- Radio hosts and presenters have been warned that they will be held personally responsible for any reckless statements and ethical violations.

- In-house policies which borrow a lot from the MCK Code of Conduct. These policies are meant to ensure greater responsibility and accountability for their programming and actions. The policies give directions on dealings with important actors such as advertisers, interviewees and guests.

- Editors and managers carry out regular needs assessment of their staff to determine gaps that may affect their performance.
The hosts should always lead discussions. Media houses have been advised to have machines to help screen caller statement before broadcast.

Clear rules of engagement. These should be shared with listeners for them to know and understand what is expected of them.

**General challenges to vernacular radio stations in Kenya**

Some untrained or unqualified broadcasters are often unaware of the power their words. In effect, their pronouncements are sometimes offensive and provocative. Some of the presenters are actually not trained journalists or presenters but celebrities with little understanding of media operations and requirements. In effect, issues like land, terrorism and others may be quite complex for presenters without the requisite knowledge and skills to work in radio. They may also not possess research, interview and people skills which are critical in many talk shows and interviews.

Furthermore, because they are often inexperienced, they are unable to properly question, contextualise and balance the views of very partisan guests, particularly when live on-air.

What’s more, financial challenges mean lack of resources, poor pay and working conditions that may compromise professionalism. This means they sometimes ‘paid’ or ‘bribed’ to allow invective, unverified and uncivil statements that denigrate opponents. Such statements have the potential to breed contempt and hatred for others. In addition, lack of resources means they are unable to invest in technology and modern equipment that may assist in the production of quality programming. This may in turn lead to poor quality or sub-standard programming.

The fact that the stations are owned by people, including politicians and business people, means they sometimes unable to uphold professionalism and integrity.
Conclusion

The media’s role in promoting state unity cannot be overemphasized. Nonetheless, it should be noted that the media is a double-edged sword. On one hand, it can be instrumental in conflict resolution, uniting communities and promoting peace and cohesion. On the other, the media can incite violence and hate through misinformation. This was clearly illustrated in the violence that followed the 2007 disputed presidential results.

Vernacular radio stations must be available, accessible, acceptable, accountable and affordable to their listeners. This means local populations should be encouraged to participate in programming, dialogues and others. This is critical to the development of participatory democracy given the importance of articulation or expression and formation of public opinion.

Being one of the most influential and accessible media, it is vitally important that they uphold and promote professionalism. This includes respect for important tenets like the accuracy of information, objectivity, fairness and impartiality. It is also important to engage in media literacy to help audiences understand their responsibilities as participants in important mass media dialogues.

The radio stations and their owners should be compelled to employ qualified and responsible staff who understand the importance and consequences of their work. Given that radio is a key contributor of information in society, staff must adhere to professional and ethical requirements. In addition, the staff should be subjected to continuous professional training to enhance their capacity to work in radio. They should be exposed to international best practices and standards. This also means that owners must invest in human capital.

The trainings and investments in both human and other resources would undoubtedly improve the quality of programming. It is sad to note that some discussions are either culturally insensitive or have been dramatised for effect. This has the potential to cause strife in fragile societies. Thus understanding the context and society in which the media operate as well as the issues may serve to enhance the role of radio in socio-economic, cultural and political developments.

Recommendations

- Journalists and others working in vernacular radio stations should be continually trained to improve their analytical, moderation and presentation skills. In other words, there is need to invest more in the capacity building. This will also staff deeply understand and analyse the issues and people they are dealing with.

- Vernacular FM radio stations should ensure that they only recruit trained journalists and staff who are able to professionally and effectively moderate discussions. The journalists and other staff should be well versed on ethical and professional principles that guide media operations.

- Show hosts and presenters should always check the accuracy of the
information they present. Some of the hosts take their audiences for granted and assume that they lack the capacity to comprehend issues and participate effectively in radio discussions. Moreover, presenters should always give background information of the issues before commencement of programmes. This makes discussions more meaningful and informed.

- The use of emotional and invective language, generally unacceptable based on article 12 of the Code of Conduct, during talk-shows and interviews should be avoided. Words are powerful agents for good and evil.

- Vernacular stations need to examine long term causes and consequences of the conflict.

- Talk-show hosts should have the courage to challenge uninformed and stereotypical statements. Some stereotypes have the potential to cause misunderstanding, tension and conflict.