

Community Radio: Building Trust and Cohesion Among Communities – Kenya Community Media Network Celebrates World Radio Day 2022

The eleventh edition of World Radio Day will be held on 13 February under the theme: **“Radio and Trust”**. 13 February every year is a date proclaimed by the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) to celebrate radio broadcast, improve international cooperation among radio broadcasters and encourage decision-makers to create and provide access to information through radio. It is an occasion to draw attention to the unique value of radio, which remains the medium to reach the widest audience and is currently taking up new technological forms and devices.

This year’s theme **“Radio and Trust”** aims to look at not only how Radio can continue to raise listeners’ trust and continue being the trusted source of verified information and become the trustworthy catalyst for integration, cohesion, and social participation but also how to transform loyal audience engagement into the financial sustainability of the radio stations.

The theme of this year is so topical as the world is grappling with misinformation, disinformation, and fake news. The COVID-19 pandemic has brought about a thirst for truth and factual information which has placed the media on spot. The pandemic has forced us all to look at what is true and trustworthy.

In Kenya, we even need to be more vigilant as the electioneering season is here with us. This is the season when politicians throw their honorable tag out of the window and spew hate, engage in disinformation and propaganda to paint their competitors as bad people as they desperately look for votes. Propaganda, misinformation, disinformation, and fake news can seriously erode the trust of radio, destabilize and seriously affect communities.

In this new media era community journalism has taken over social media platforms without considering the basic standards of ethical journalism. As such the community radio stations remain the first point of reference for community members who are seeking for truthful information. This, therefore, is a clear demonstration and indicator that the community radio stations are the trusted sources of factual information for the many marginalized communities thus we say **“Yes to Radio, Yes to Trust”**

As we approach the general election and as we cover the election campaigns, the communities that we serve through our network of 42 radio stations will not only be looking upon us to give them factual information that will help them in making informed decisions and choices at the ballot box but also balanced and unbiased information that will build the trust and promote peace and cohesion among the communities before, during and after elections.

Community radio stations have played a critical role in debunking the COVID-19 fake news and disinformation around COVID-19 vaccines. They have also played a critical role in creating awareness on public health matters related to the prevention of the spread of COVID-19 and peacebuilding without support from the government. Community broadcasting service is more of a devolved public broadcaster and we are of the view that the government should establish a fund that will support and promote community broadcasting services in Kenya.

We also call upon the regulator, the Communications Authority of Kenya, to review the current broadcasting regulations and put in place regulations and simplified reporting tools that are relevant to community broadcasting service in recognition of the sector as distinct tire of broadcasting.

Kenya Community Media Network and the community radio stations would like to extend our gratitude to GIZ Civil Peace Service for their continued support to the community radio stations through our Umoja Radio for Peace (UR4P) project and for fully supporting this event. Thank you.

"Yes to radio, yes to trust"

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