



## **Building Community Resilience Against COVID-19 through the Community Green Radio**

AUGUST, 2020



The new corona virus (COVID-19) crisis is continuing to widen with thousands of cases being registered daily, world-wide. In Uganda, over 6,000 cases had been registered by August, 2020 despite the government enforcing a countrywide lockdown in March, 2020.

The lockdown that is now being eased in phases included suspending all public transport, closing schools, bars, shops (apart from those selling food and health related products), public markets among others.

Within two months of the pandemic, it became clear that getting a complete cure for the virus was going to take long.

The solution therefore was in prevention and building body immunity to fight and make the virus less fatal.

With this in mind, NAPE swung into action using its Sustainability School and Community Green Radio (CGR) networks to sensitise and demonstrate to the masses how to prevent the spread of the corona virus.



The Chairman of the Kiboga District COVID-19 Task Force Al Hajji Umar Lule Mawiya (standing) and the Executive Director of NAPE, Mr. Frank Muramuzi (Right) during a planning meeting on how to use the Community Green Radio to disseminate messages aimed at curbing the spread of COVID-19



Temperature check at the entrance of the Community Green Radio office block as one of the COVID-19 preventive measures.

## Building Community Resilience Against COVID-19 through the Community Green Radio



A community Green Radio listener from Hoima District.

### What is the Community Green Radio?

In 2014, The National Association of Professional Environmentalists (NAPE), established the Community Green Radio in Uganda's oil rich Albertine graben with an aim of mobilising communities to participate in environmental conservation and protection activities, defending their human rights and giving them a platform to debate and voice their concerns regarding the oil and gas activities.

The radio now with its studios in Kiboga Town has gone ahead to be the voice and mouthpiece of the grassroots communities in the region. It covers the districts of Kiboga, Kyankwanzi, Kikuube,



A listener of the Community Green Radio from Kikuube District being interviewed

Hoima, Buliisa, Kasanda, Masindi, Kibaale, Luweero among others. The radio was established with support from NAPE partners who include the

Open Society Initiative for East Africa (OSIEA), Rosa Luxemburg Foundation and the American Jewish World Service.

## Community Green Radio in the COVID-19 Fight

When the government announced the COVID-19 lockdown in March, 2020, media houses were not closed as they were considered to be providing essential services. The CGR therefore, continued with its operations but with very serious hardships.

Public transport including boda-bodas (special hire motor cycles) were all suspended making it hard for radio staff to move out and gather news. The government gave out special stickers to media houses to put on their vehicles to allow them move but the CGR doesn't have an official vehicle yet.

Then, there was curfew imposed at 7:00 pm which curtailed movements of everyone including journalists and put them at the mercy of the ruthless local defense personnel (LDUs) that were always patrolling the streets at night.

Despite the above hardships, the Community Green Radio persevered. Staff rode bicycles and moved on foot to reach community members that were now largely isolated in their homes and sensitized them on COVID-19 prevention. The radio also gave much media coverage about the conditions that the grassroots communities were exposed to and the challenges that they had in adhering to the COVID-19 prevention guidelines. The radio carried spot messages on a daily basis on COVID prevention



Mr. Julius Kyamanywa, the Station Manager of the Community Green Radio demonstrates to members of Kiyuni Listeners Club in Kyankwanzi District how to use the COVID-19 prevention hand wash equipment donated by NAPE

and management. Dedicated radio talk-shows were held on COVID-19. These were on prevention, management but also addressing the human rights abuses that cropped out in the process of implementing Government regulations on curbing the pandemic. Other talk-shows addressed issues of youth and school going children that were now staying in the communities full-time.

As a result of the intensive campaign carried out by the Community Green Radio, NAPE was able to receive donations of COVID-19 prevention materials from its development partners such as hand wash tanks, facemasks, infra-red thermometers and sanitisers which were then passed on to the partner communities in the Districts of Kiboga, Kyankwanzi, Hoima, Kikuube and Buliisa.

## Listeners Clubs

In the efforts towards curbing the COVID-19 pandemic, the radio worked closely with its listeners clubs. The listeners clubs act as wheels of the radio in the target communities. They provide information and feedback to the radio programmes and also comprise of the pool of the community journalists.

So when NAPE/CGR received the COVID prevention materials, they were given to the listeners' clubs leaders who were sensitized on how to use them and they in turn demonstrated to their communities on how to utilise them and also on how to make their own.



In the CGR studios: Some NAPE staff (left) and some women activists during a talk-show on social justice just few days before the government announced the COVID-19 lockdown



*"Without these listeners clubs, the radio would not fully take on the character of a community radio. These clubs inform us of the community needs and aspirations and we focus our programming on fulfilling them", - Mr. Frank Muramuzi, NAPE Executive Director.*

## Community Voices

*"Right from its inception, the Community Green Radio has been sensitizing us on the importance of having enough food in our households. The food sovereignty campaign has been constant on this radio. When the Corona virus crisis came, that is when we realized fully, the importance of what the radio has been telling us all along. Many of us who had food in our granaries did not suffer much. But our neighbours who had no much food in their stores or had no granaries at all suffered a lot during this period" -Miss Peninah Ruhindi, Kigaaga Listeners Club-Hoima District.*



*"When the government imposed the COVID-19 night curfews, the security personnel especially LDUs turned a menace to the entire communities. They would beat up everyone they found out after 7:00 PM without first asking whether that person had an emergency or not. They were acting as if they had no conscience. But when the Community Green Radio organised a talk-show involving senior police officers in the region and the Resident District Commissioners, the situation normalized and the harassment of the community members by the security officials reduced"- Asuman Sembatya from Nabidondolo Listeners Club in Kyankwanzi District.*

*"I thank NAPE and the Community Green Radio for giving us the hand wash tanks, face masks and the infra-red thermometres. We have used them mostly to demonstrate to the many people who come to our centre on how the corona virus can be prevented"- Ms. Alice Kazimura, Kakindo Listeners Club and leader of Kakindo Women Integrated Development Association (KAWIDA)*



*"During one of the talk-shows at the Community Green Radio, we learnt that even us as community members can be able to make our own face masks to prevent COVID in consultation with ministry of health officials. Since we were already working in crafts as a women group, we decided to start making face masks ourselves which we then distribute to our community members"- Sylvia Kemigisa- Kairo Women's Group*