

Radio Kwizera of P.O. Box 14 Ngara-Kagera was founded in 1995 as an initiative of the Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS), the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) and the Catholic Diocese of Rulenge-Ngara (formally Rulenge). It is registered as a Regional Non-Profit Radio for community service under the statutes and laws of the United Republic of Tanzania. The establishment of the radio was a direct response to the huge deficit in information and education among the rising numbers of refugees fleeing from the Rwandan genocide and the instability around the GLR of Africa into the Western parts of Tanzania. By 1994 there were about half a million refugees fleeing the genocide in Rwanda who camped in this region. With others from Burundi and DRC in the years after the numbers of refugees surpasses a million people.

RK was therefore established to accompany the refugees in the locality by providing a bridge between them and the local communities, government of Tanzania and agencies working with them. It, hence, provided a podium for the refugees to be informed and educated as they voiced their concerns on important issues regarding their everyday life in the camps in addition to broadcasting news programs for the local Tanzanians, their hosts. As a mouthpiece of the refugees, RK has for many years been the only regular link between the refugees and their governments back in Rwanda, Burundi and DRC and also the only source of information from the host government of Tanzania for the local Tanzanian listenership. And in its endeavour the radio seeks to continue **“sowing the seeds of hope”** among refugees and the local population by building a culture of peace and tolerance. This has been facilitated by the use of technological advances in media that enables the radio to monitor news from all over the Great Lakes Region and supplement this with international news all over the world for its diverse audience.

At the time of the radio's inception, misuse of the mass media, particularly with the *“Radio and Television Mille Collines”* communication that exacerbated the genocide in Rwanda, was still fresh in people's minds. Mistrust and suspicion of such means of communication was therefore unavoidable. However, with the huge gap in information and education among refugees, their host communities and organisations working with them, Radio Kwizera was born to exemplify how mass media can be positively employed.

The bulk of the radio's coverage area has been neglected and has remained peripheral in the development plans of Tanzania. Many parts lacked essential services and infrastructure. The area's district headquarters, Ngara, was for instance inaccessible by public transport and it remained deeply remote for years. Over 3 million people living in the district and its immediate surrounding

did not have easy access to local and national news. Those who had radio sets had to tune to the international Radios such as BBC and RFI with SW signals for news touching on their country.

The influx of refugees therefore only complicated matters within the region and RK responded to the needs. Many issues pertaining to the rights and privileges of refugees, education, healthcare and protection were addressed through the radio. Fleeing family members who had separated were reunited and were later repatriated to their countries of origin when there was relative peace. At the same time, the local host communities have benefited from the broadcasts with specific targets on environmental awareness and development issues as well as human rights and civic education.

The station also publishes a bi-monthly news bulletin named “*Refugee Informational Gaps*” (RIG) mainly with news stories from refugee camps touching on their needs and serious concerns that need to be addressed by either their host government (Tanzania), UNHCR, the body that is in charge of refugee protection or international and local NGOs or their home governments. This news bulletin is also sent electronically to relevant and interested international organizations. In all these endeavours, the radio has been characterized by a search, creation, and defense and at the same time a promotion of a culture of peace, tolerance, understanding and development among groups.

Though the number of refugees has greatly reduced, Radio Kwizera still serves the remaining refugees mainly from Burundi and The Democratic Republic of Congo. The existence of this refugee population is an indication of the need to continue with the message of tolerance, reconciliation and peace. This need has lately been addressed by the search and exposition of the existing potentials among communities within the Great Lakes Region so as to help them unlock their potentials and to tap into genuine and sustainable engagements. RK’s demand has therefore expanded over the whole of North-western Tanzania, Eastern parts of Rwanda and Burundi and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

RK therefore supports and helps to build community based organizations engaged in education, Income Generating Activities (IGA), health and sanitation, Agriculture and environmental conservation through campaigns, contests and other social services. She accompanies, empowers, educates, serves and advocates the right of refugees, the marginalized and the vulnerable in the spirit of justice for all. RK has been instrumental in disseminating information on security situations of countries of origin of refugees with the idea of helping them to repatriate voluntarily. The dissemination of information and education is also aimed at enhancing a culture of mutual understanding between refugees and their host communities. Children rights and education has also been at the fore of the radio’s mandate and the 2009 International Children Peace Award to Baruani Ndume shows the extent of our efforts.

Organizational and Personnel Situation

Radio Kwizera is headed by a Director who is in charge of the daily running of the radio and seeks mandate from and reports to the Board of Management. The Board of Management comprises Fr. Joseph Afulo, (Jesuits Provincial East Africa) who is the chairperson of the Board, Fr. Damas Missanga (Director, JRS/Radio Kwizera) – Secretary; Rev. Severine Niwemugizi (Bishop Rulenge-Ngara Catholic Diocese) – Member; Rev. Joseph Mlola (Bishop Catholic Diocese of Kigoma) – Member; Rev. A. Rweyongeza (Bishop Catholic Diocese of Karagwe)-Member and Fr. Endashaw Debrebwork (Director, Jesuits Refugee Service, East Africa Region) – member.

The director is assisted by a staff of 32 people [among them 19 journalists, 8 of whom are women]. Besides there are two Team Leaders (TL) heading the two sub-stations of Kibondo and Kasulu as well as a financial controller, logistics officer, marketing officer, Technicians, and other supporting staff. Among the staff members, women hold key positions such as the human resource, marketing office and team leaders of the two substations. Positions headed by female personnel include the Human resources, Marketing office, Team Leaders of Kasulu and Kibondo and assistants to the News Editor and Financial controller.

Experience: Successes, Challenges & Lessons Learnt

From our long experience derived from accompanying refugees, Radio Kwizera has met immense successes and learned a lot from challenges met. Notable successes that the radio has managed to count include the increased awareness of human rights in general and refugee rights in particular among refugees and the local population. The repatriation of Rwandan refugees in 1996-97, voluntary repatriation of Burundian refugees that began in 2006 and the naturalization of the 1972 Burundians living in the settlements of Mishamo, Katumba and Ulyankulu, and the continual repatriation of the Congolese refugees on voluntary basis.

RK has played a major role in all these movements that went hand in hand with the closure of all refugees' camps in Ngara, Kibondo and Kigoma by providing necessary and timely information for the refugees to make informed decisions on repatriation. Such information as, the decisions made by tripartite (governments of Tanzania, Burundi and UNHCR) commission concerning the refugees. What is required before, during and the time of repatriation, schedules, assistance given in the camps and in Burundi or DRC, issues concerning lands, security, schooling and answering many queries that refugees needed to know about their future in their countries of origin.

This has led to notable acknowledgment of the interaction between refugees and their host communities and government building good living conditions for both. For this Tanzania has

been commended for its care for Refugees compared to other countries within the region. The provision of reliable knowledge of refugees' countries of origin contributed to voluntary repatriation of refugees back to their countries where there was peace.

Another notable achievement has been recorded in the fight against bad cultural practices such as the killing of albinos, gender biasness, stereotype attitudes and corruption. The radio has tried to inculcating into people's mind the importance of respect for life and human rights in general through well received and acknowledged radio programs. For instance, the awarding of the 2009 International Children Peace Prize to Baruani Ndume who runs one the radio's program on children's right is a major acknowledgment of the radio's efforts on the rights of children and vulnerable groups. The radio has also contributed a lot in civic education of the populace especially in relation to their political rights and obligations. This latter has seen increased numbers and interest in voting and participation in the electoral process in 2000 and 2005. Continued greater interest in the same is evident in this year's (2010) electioneering period.

Challenges so far experienced by Radio Kwizera include sourcing, training and retention of personnel. Due to the remote location of the radio and the meager salaries the radio can afford to pay its skilled personnel, it becomes difficult to convince notable and talented journalist to work with the radio. Yet the mobility of the few experienced once who have been working with the radio has been high due to the nature of the industry within the region and the demand for higher salaries.

Another challenge relates to the expansion of the radio to meet its wider demand. There is an increasing demand of our programs within the region and the need to expand to more areas. Whereas we have managed to put up a 5 kilowatts transmitter and a 46 Meters mast at Ngara, the terrain has posed challenges in the overall reception of the FM frequencies in some parts where there is need. The only option is to erect more masts in those areas, an exercise that is costly. The other alternative of connecting the radio to satellite would be promising but still the costs would be high. Due to these challenges we seek for alternative sources of funds through partnering with other organization that can support and sponsor specific programs for the radio to remain a community radio station with no economic value in the airing of our programs.

Collaboration with other Organisations

Since its inception, Radio Kwizera has had constructive collaboration with UNHCR and continues being its implementing partners on issues concerning refugees. This collaboration has focused on information and education to the refugees including all matters relevant to human rights in

general and refugee rights in particular, repatriation, health and sanitation among others.

RK is also in cooperation with UNICEF on specific issues relating to education and children rights. This has seen an implementation of a children's program, "Child for Child" that seeks to advance children's rights by children themselves live on radio. The impact has been tremendous as attested by the awarding of 2009 international Nobel Peace Prize for Children to Baruani Ndume who is a host of the Programme.

On issues of HIV/AIDS awareness and prevention, Radio Kwizera has a long-lasting agreement with the African Jesuits Aids Network (AJAN) on different programme design and broadcasting of programs. The main target groups of these programs are the high risk individuals and groups like adolescent girls and school going children.

The radio has other agreements of cooperation with other institutions and local government agencies.

Geographical area and Coverage: S 02°30'493" E 030°39'638" HSL 1,829 mts

RK's main offices are in Ngara – North-west of Tanzania, in Kagera Region. Its coverage areas include North-West Tanzania, Eastern parts of Rwanda and Burundi as well as parts of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Hence, the project is intended to cover all these areas.

North Western Tanzania borders Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi and the Democratic Republic of Congo. It is one of the most abandoned and deprived region with poor infrastructure and lack of means of communications, few schools and the local population rely on subsistence agricultural economy. The borders are porous and insecurity abounds. The whole area covers square kilometers 65,425 (Kagera 28, 388 sq KM & Kigoma 37, 037 sq KM).

RK overall covered terrestrial area is 62,571 Sq. Kms with overall terrestrial Audience of 4,423,861. (source: www.nbs.go.tz, www.kagera.go.tz, www.fmscan.org and google earth Pro & Physical topographic survey @2015)

RK Points of presence:

Active: Ngara (base), Kasulu, Kibondo, Bukoba,

Active by Jan 2016: Kahama, Geita,

To be activated in 2016: Musoma, Shinyanga, Simiyu, and Katavi.