



## **MATHARE FM**

**The first community radio station in the ghetto Mathare  
Valley, Nairobi, Kenya.**

**“STOP the BULLET!”**

By Maji Mazuri [www.majimazuri.org](http://www.majimazuri.org)

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## **“STOP the BULLET!”**

A mother of a Maji Mazuri Youth group member (see below for more information on Maji Mazuri) shared her view on youth and violence in Mathare Valley:

“Maji Mazuri has stopped many bullets for our children. The bullets of crime and violence, the bullets of drugs and alcohol, the bullets of poverty.... My son grew up in and has been trained by Maji Mazuri and through Maji Mazuri he has been able to open a shop. He takes care of me now while I see other sons of women who are addicted to drugs and alcohol and who participate in violence and crime. I have seen so many of them die from police bullets. We want to stop the bullets that hurt our children, we need to include them in Maji Mazuri.”

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### **Abstract of the radio project: MATHARE FM**

Maji Mazuri (see below for more information) wants to launch the first community radio station in Mathare Valley, called ‘Mathare FM’, that will give people in this ghetto the information, the education and the tools to promote peace, gain access to jobs, funding and other economic and social empowerment opportunities and create unity in the community of 11 ghetto villages that comprise Mathare Valley. The escalating violence of the past decade, which culminated into the post-election violence following the 2007 General Elections, has left permanent marks in the Mathare community. Many people in the Mathare ghetto fear new violence as the 2012 General Elections draw near.

As a result of a decade of violence in the ghetto Mathare Valley the community of 11 ghetto villages are fragmented into different regional, class-based, ethnic-based, gender and age groups and each group has retreated inward to deal with current problems and face future ones. The danger of fragmentation and the subsequent exclusion of so called ‘others’ lies in increased susceptibility to political manipulation, peer pressure, negative stereotyping and even vilification of ‘others’. This all could lead, and in the recent past many times has led, to violence while such demonising discourses have been often appropriated to legitimise violence. The process of ‘othering’ that has been enabled by the fragmentation of the community in various groups can only be countered by this community wide project, a community radio station that provides much needed civic and non-formal education and that

initiates the sharing of information, interaction, cooperation and that encourages unification in social and economic empowerment activities.

### **The moment is now.**

In the run-up to, during and in the aftermath of the 2007 General Elections it were mainly, so called, 'idle' youth in the Mathare Valley ghetto who were mobilised in political violence. The best way to promote peace now and in the near future is to base peace promotion strategies on their experiences and frame of reference, involve them in the implementation of such interventions and provide them with jobs and other social and economic opportunities that will give them hope. The community radio station will target the most vulnerable youth in this ghetto, the youth who survive by engaging in crime, prostitution and brewing alcohol, who lack hope for a better future and who have no network (and do not belong to youth groups, CBO's and NGO's operating in the area) to help them access jobs and other opportunities.

Thus far no peace intervention developed in Kenya has ever been able to reach these youth because they are not affiliated with formal organisations. Mathare FM will not only develop this community radio station and air programs together with 40 youth from the most vulnerable groups (i.e. criminals, prostitutes, alcohol brewers) but it will also provide all 'idle' youth with information about jobs and other social economic opportunities in and outside the ghetto. This guarantees that the radio content and conflict resolution strategies developed by these youth will speak to the mind and address the needs of many similar youth in Mathare Valley. The moment is now that the next elections are looming on the horizon.

### **Radio is the vital link to making digital journalism and mapping websites successful**

The community radio station, Mathare FM, that is to be launched by Maji Mazuri will provide the necessary network of reporters and on 'the ground' researchers for the following websites: MapMathare.org (still in preparation stage, see MapKibera.org for the idea) and Hatari.co.ke. These websites cannot exist without valid and frequent data input and reports from 'the ground'. The information, news and updates gathered by the radio station will feed the websites and help these sites to expose verified information about Mathare to the outside world. On the other hand, these websites cannot acquire meaning within the community

without assistance of the radio station since only a small percentage of ghetto residents have access to computers and can read the data on these websites. Digital journalism and mapping cannot, therefore, exist and develop meaningful data both to the outside world and for the community without the support of a community radio station such as Mathare FM.

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### **Objective of Mathare FM:**

The aim of this project is threefold:

1. Create awareness about past and current conflicts and the dangers of ‘ethnicisation’, (with ‘ethnicisation’ we mean understanding local tensions in ethnic terms that articulate with political narratives and play into the hands of manipulative political elites). This has fuelled violence in the past. The aim of this project, the launch of the first community owned radio station in Mathare Valley, is to create awareness about political instigation through radio. Radio, in contrast to newspapers and Internet, is very easy to access in Mathare where the majority of people are (semi-)illiterate and do not speak English fluently. The radio station Mathare FM will air all programs in Sheng and in (the local dialect of) Kiswahili. More and better information about past and current conflicts and the way violence is whipped up in the language that people speak on a daily basis will help reduce the susceptibility of youth (and other community members) to political manipulation. This project will provide people in the Mathare community with new frameworks to grasp local tensions and work towards solutions together. Through community dialogue, access to information and education through radio and a daily radio soap opera this project aims to work on conflict resolution ‘in the moment’ and ‘from below’. This project is supervised by a committee of community representatives (see for more information below) and this committee will work closely with all existing community organisations to engage in weekly meetings and monthly debates to collectively assess incidents as they are happening on the ground. The tools of radio, community dialogue and education through radio will then be appropriated to communicate solutions throughout the entire community and stimulate debates and interaction between antagonist groups. This way Mathare FM, with the slogan ‘STOP the BULLET!’, aims to encourage

community cohesion and assist the community to develop tools to quell simmering tensions as they are whipped up.

2. Create job opportunities for youth from Mathare Valley who have the wish and the talent to become editors, radio presenters, reporters and DJ's, radio technicians, scriptwriters and/or radio actors.
3. Launch and organise an extensive trauma counselling program for community members. This way this project aims to address the present danger of unsolved trauma's fuelling future tensions and violence. The radio will support the counselling program by giving education about trauma's and counselling methods, notify people about counselling opportunities in Mathare provided by Maji Mazuri (the initiating organisation, see for more information below) and air personal narratives with respect to trauma counselling. This program, to which the radio is a vital tool, will offer youth and other community members with creative and effective tools, developed by themselves with guidance from experts, to deal with traumas and to vent their frustrations.

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**Sense of Urgency:**

**Why is there a need for a community radio station in Mathare Valley?**

The radio station Mathare FM will furthermore assist the Mathare community to avoid the following incidents from reoccurring:

1. During the civic education campaign in the run-up to the referendum on the new constitution, held on 4 August 2010, none of the official interventions reached Mathare. Even if the awareness campaign about the new constitution would have reached Mathare most people would have not understood the English language or Kiswahili words used by the educators and written in the hand-outs on the constitution (for instance in the pull-outs included with the daily newspapers). The radio station Mathare FM will be able to reach the entire community and provide them with civic education in local languages and in relation to local political and social contexts. This

will play a vital part in preventing violence in the run-up to the 2012 elections. In addition, Mathare FM will be able to offer adult education to the elderly, run all kinds of (human rights) awareness programs and increase access to vital information with regard to the constitution and implementation of new laws (such as the legalisation of chang'aa).

2. Community members often miss out on opportunities provided by the government funds because they lack the knowledge about such opportunities and on how to navigate certain procedures. Mathare FM will assist the community by providing them with relevant information and guidance to access funding possibilities both for individuals and groups in Mathare. Many job opportunities are advertised in the newspapers but only a small minority of people in Mathare are able to purchase and/or read a newspaper and this has led to missing out on job opportunities. An illustrative example was the recent clearing of major sewer lines in Mathare initiated by the local council that hired day labourers from Eastlands but people in Mathare did not know about this initiative and were not able to apply. Henceforth the sewers in their own community were cleared by workers from other neighbourhoods.
3. Community organisations and leaders often are left unchecked because community members do not have the infrastructure, the tools and the reach to inform the community about progress, results and mishaps. Individual leaders can execute power and make decisions without proper consultation of and consent by community members. The radio station will be able to inform community members and engage them in decision-making processes with respect to their community and at the same time function as a tool to check leaders and expose mishaps. In short, Mathare FM will encourage participation of community members in democratic processes and enables them to hold leaders and NGO's accountable for their actions and avoid further exploitation of the community at large.
4. The 11 ghetto villages that comprise the Mathare ghetto have very little knowledge about each other and each village has its own history and social make-up and culture. In the past the lack of knowledge about, and lack of relationship with, each other has engendered negative stereotypes and triggered community competition and even violence. The radio will encourage exchange of information and increase knowledge

about the various social groups and cultures and about the social and economic challenges these groups face and that are specific to each ghetto village.

5. Outside Mathare there is very little knowledge on existing social organisations in Mathare and vice versa and this obstructs local community developments projects. The radio will be able to present existing organisations, groups and initiatives in Mathare to the outside world and will be able to connect NGO's and governmental organisations with the appropriate counterparts in the Mathare ghetto. More knowledge about local initiatives will also engender a more positive image of the Mathare ghetto and this will positively impact both society's and the community's image of the ghetto.

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**Initiating Organisation:** Maji Mazuri ([www.majimazuri.org](http://www.majimazuri.org)).

Maji Mazuri is the brainchild of Wanjiku Kironyo, a native of Kenya. As professor at the University of Nairobi in the early 1980s, she tasked her students with researching the needs of the local community. The stories which returned to her of the Mathare Valley slum, less than four miles from Nairobi's city center, were so horrific that Ms. Kironyo decided to see for herself. Ms. Kironyo discovered housing, for which tenants must pay rent, contain no indoor plumbing, and generally house between 5 and 8 people in a 2 by 3 meters space. The resulting sanitation hazard is unimaginably dire. Worse, Ms. Kironyo found this area to be populated largely with women who were victims of domestic violence and unwanted pregnancy; these women and their children lived among criminals and drug dealers, and were frequently forced into prostitution. The sight of an old woman clinging to the feeble rafters of her shack to survive floods resulting from a sudden downpour was Ms. Kironyo's impetus to action.

Founded in 1984, Maji Mazuri, meaning "good water" in Swahili, is a not-for-profit organization whose mission is to help people escape the bondage of poverty, ignorance and myth and to become fully developed individuals. Put simply: give hope, make a difference. Maji Mazuri achieves this goal through the implementation of four interrelated programs which each engage in numerous special projects to advance education, health and socio-

economic development, computer literacy and entrepreneurship: there are five schools and an orphanage serving mentally and physically handicapped children; there are two youth groups, a microloan program and a farming program; and there are two community centers, one specifically for children. All of these facilities serve the Mathare Valley community.

The universal thread connecting the people who use our programs is their extreme poverty. One of our largest constituencies consists of children and youth. Many girls face constant sexual harassment and are frequently victims of domestic and sexual violence. Because of the high probability of pregnancy, girls are often encouraged to marry early, damaging their chances at education and sustainable work. The many boys that attend our program are also pressured into drug dealing, selling chang'aa, the local "moonshine," and petty crime. Those growing up in the Mathare Valley often see crime and prostitution as the only way to survive. These young girls and boys come to our schools and youth programs to receive a traditional primary and secondary education with a heavy emphasis on computer literacy. Older teens receive counselling and business training. The counselling is particularly important for teen girls, many of whom have children, as it allows them to make concrete plans to improve their lives and the lives of their children. Finally, adults use our facilities for business training and can qualify for micro-loan financing. Providing these services to the primary breadwinners of a household has allowed us to lift entire families out of poverty. Maji Mazuri provides education, health care, computer literacy training, counselling, and micro-loans to men and women of all ages in the poorest economic bracket.

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**Partners:** La Benevolencija ([www.labenevolencija.org](http://www.labenevolencija.org)), MweluFoundation ([www.mwelu.org](http://www.mwelu.org)) and Koch FM ([www.kochfm.org](http://www.kochfm.org))

**Website partners:** [www.MapMathare.org](http://www.MapMathare.org) and [www.Hatari.co.ke](http://www.Hatari.co.ke)

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**Committee of Community Representatives:**

The Committee of Community Representatives has 7 members and will supervise the radio station and guide and check the radio presenters, reporters and writers with regards to the programme outline and access to (job- and other) opportunities. The committee guarantees an inclusive approach to community development and assures that the radio reaches out to all of

the 11 ghetto villages that comprise Mathare Valley and addresses the needs of the wider Mathare community. This committee is chaired by a radio coordinator and his/her assistant, both who are staff members of Maji Mazuri and who are in charge of the daily operation and management of the radio station.

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**Project duration:** February 2011-January 2013

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## **Project Description**

### *Radio*

Mathare FM ‘STOP the BULLET!’ is the first community radio station in the Mathare Valley ghetto and Maji Mazuri decided on radio to promote peace and enhance access to social and economic opportunity for the entire Mathare community because this media is remarkably apt to reach the Mathare community, especially its youth who are most vulnerable when violence is whipped up.

Radio is a powerful tool to reach people on a daily basis, especially in the poorer echelons of Kenyan society such as the Mathare ghetto. Many people in the Mathare ghetto are illiterate but listen to radios during work, in bars and at home. The objective is to run a daily program on peace that combines education with entertainment (edutainment), that is spoken in the local slang (Sheng) and that is made by youth from the community, based on stories of the community to promote peace in the community.

### *Mathare FM*

Maji Mazuri will set up the first small community radio station called Mathare FM in the heart of the Mathare ghetto and in this endeavour Maji Mazuri is assisted by Koch FM who has set up a similar station in Korogocho in 2006. Koch FM has vast experience in starting up a community radio station and has used radio to quell unrest in Korogocho in the past on numerous occasions with positive results. The way Koch FM intervened in mounting unrest following the 2007 General Election was exceptionally astonishing and inspirational. With help from Koch FM Maji Mazuri will train 15 youth and 2 staff members to man the station

and run the various programs (music programs, local news and, most importantly, the radio soap opera on peace).

#### *Radio soap opera on peace*

The main program on Mathare FM will be a radio-soap on peace that will be aired everyday between 20.00 and 21.00. La Benevolencija has developed radio-soap opera's to promote peace in many war torn countries, such as ex-Yugoslavia to Rwanda, Burundi and Eastern-Congo, with astounding results and has offered to share their experience with Maji Mazuri by training 25 more youth to become scriptwriters and actors.

#### *Outreach to more youth in the Mathare Valley ghetto*

Throughout the duration of the project Maji Mazuri will give workshops to youth from the community in peace advocacy, trauma counselling and conflict resolution to reach 15 new youth per week (apart from the 40 youth who will work in the project).

#### *Community involvement*

Pamoja Trust is an organisation that assists people in various Nairobi ghetto communities in organising themselves (in Muungano Wanavijiji, communities of villagers) and work on community development together. Pamoja Trust will assist Maji Mazuri in promoting Mathare FM in the Mathare ghetto and get feedback from the many different ghetto villages to fine-tune program content and monitor effectiveness.

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### **Continuity**

Mathare FM 'STOP the BULLET' is planned within a set time frame, i.e. from February 2011 until January 2013, but Maji Mazuri will embark on locating local funds (both from the local community –local advertisement and so on- and Kenyan donors) to continue the project when the described project period is finished. Its Dutch partner, Duara Foundation [www.duara.org](http://www.duara.org), will raise additional funds for operation costs to enable Mathare FM to continue its work long after the described project period.

**Budget:**

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Euros</b>
<b>Phase 1: preparation</b>	<b>February 2011-June 2011</b>	
Identify location and rent Phase 1		383
Get a radio frequency in Mathare		1.260
Purchase radio equipment (see appendix 1)		6.248
<b>Phase 2: Training</b>	<b>July 2011-September 2011</b>	
Rent Phase 2		230
Training, guidance and supervision of 2 Maji Mazuri staff members by Koch FM		306
Training of 15 radio scriptwriters by Rwandese staff from La Benevolencija (including transport, food accommodation, training materials for the duration of the training week etc...)		2.500
Training of 25 radio actors (including transport, food accommodation, training materials for the duration of the training week etc...)		2.500
<b>Phase 4: Mathare FM</b>	<b>October 2011-January 2013</b>	
Rent		1.224
Salary for 2 Maji Mazuri full time staff members for 16 months (204 Euros per person, per month)		6.531
Salary for 40 part-time youth (presenters, reporters, scriptwriters and actors) for 16 months (81 Euros per person per month)		52.245
Supervision, guidance and consultancy by Koch FM (51 Euros per month)		816
<b>Total in Euros</b>		<b>74.243</b>
<b>Total in Kenyan shillings</b>		<b>7.275.814</b>