

EAST AFRICA REPORT With Chris Greenway

Article from British DX Club Communication - January 2009

The following observations were made in the second half of December in Kenya. Many thanks to two excellent reference sources - Tony Rogers' *Africa on Shortwave* (on the club's website at www.bdx.org.uk) and Thorsten Hallmann's *Africalist* (at www.africalist.de.ms) - which were both very useful during my listening.

Given the uncertainty which often surrounds the exact status of many African SW stations, the main objective of this report is to confirm which are definitely active, and a few which definitely aren't. By next month, I'll have had a chance to write-up my notes on the continuing Eritrea-Ethiopia radio war, so will provide a further report for February's Communication.

One headline is that although Kenya and mainland Tanzania are both now definitely off shortwave, and Somalia also appears to be, Ethiopia continues to expand its presence on both shortwave and mediumwave.

I was using a Sony ICF-SW7600GR, so frequencies are given as observed, to the nearest 1 kHz at best.

ANGOLA

This was noted regularly on the distinctive off-channel 7217 when checking Eritrea on 7220.

CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC

Bangui heard regularly at various times during the daytime on 7220, co-channel with Eritrea.

CHAD

As reported elsewhere, Chad has resumed the use of 4905 in the morning and evening (daytime on 6165), though exact frequency usage seemed to be a bit erratic.

DR CONGO

The two SW stations in the east of the country - Radio Candip on 5066 and Radio Kahuzi on 6210 - were heard regularly with good reception at various times of the day.

DJIBOUTI

Heard regularly on 4780 with excellent signals and good quality audio. The combination of winter and low sunspot activity meant that, despite the low frequency and a distance of around 1,000 miles from my location, the station didn't fade out even during the middle of the day.

ERITREA

The only definite loggings I made of Voice of the Broad Masses of Eritrea (VOBME) were on 7220, which was heard regularly at various times of the day, although transmissions are not continuous. It was heard signing on for the evening transmission period at 1400.

On one occasion (0935 on 22 December) I heard what may have been a second VOBME channel on 7210. At 0945 this transmitter moved to 7220, co-channel with the other VOBME station, and also with Bangui, making further identification impossible.

Radio Bana on 5100 was heard regularly, and without any jamming. An English-language lesson was heard in progress with excellent reception at 1745 on 27 December (a Saturday), to close-down at 1803 after a request for letters to be sent to Department of Adult Education, Ministry of Education, Box 609, Asmara (as in the WRTH) and the national anthem.

On another occasion, English was also heard on Radio Bana just after 1500, with an ID and announcement that it was on 5100 and 1089.

No Eritrean transmissions were heard on 8000.

ETHIOPIA Shortwave: A total of 11 transmitters were confirmed active:

Radio Ethiopia National Service on 5990 (observed closer to 5991), 7110, 9704.
The Monday-Friday English broadcast is now at 1200-1300 (ex 1400-1500), with news at 1230.

Radio Ethiopia External Service (and anti-Eritrea clandestines) on 7165, 9560v. The variable 9560 transmitter was heard as low as 9556.

Radio Fana on 6110, 6890 (also heard on 1080 MW).

Voice of Tigray Revolution on 5950, 5980. The 5980 channel was only heard for the early morning transmission, closing at 0530 on weekdays (though heard beyond that time on a Saturday). 5950 is much stronger than 5980, but has telephone-quality audio, supporting the theory that 5980 is from Mekele (where the studio is) but 5950 is from Addis Ababa.

Radio Oromia on 6030 (also heard on 1035 MW).

Amhara Regional State Radio testing on 6090 at 0300-0600, 0900-1100 and 1400-1700. Not in parallel with Amhara Regional State Radio heard on listed 801 MW.

Mediumwave:

Radio Ethiopia National Service was heard on listed 594, 684, 828, 855, 873 and 972. Some of these frequencies opt-out at times for regional programmes.

As noted above, Radio Fana, Radio Oromia and Amhara State Radio were all heard on their listed MW channels.

Two unlisted MW transmitters were heard with good signals: 891 (relays National Service) and 918 (unidentified programming, definitely Ethiopia but not in parallel with any other Ethiopian stations).

On 1044, test transmissions were heard during the evening and early morning. I was pleasantly surprised to hear an announcement in English (as well as Amharic) at the start of the tests at 1600 confirming the station as Mekele on test. WRTH lists this as 200 kW, the most powerful MW (or SW) transmitter in Ethiopia.

KENYA

KBC is definitely off SW altogether. I drove to the Langata SW transmitting station on the outskirts of Nairobi and found that it was still there. (I would not have been surprised if the site had been redeveloped for housing.) I couldn't stay long but someone on the gate confirmed to me that the station was no longer operating.

The KBC Eastern regional service (which had been carried on 4915) is now only aired via local MW opt-outs in the evening on 639 and 1305.

The KBC Central regional service transmitter on 1269 has closed. The service is now only aired via a morning and evening opt-out on 747.

All other listed Kenyan MWs were heard, including Malindi 927, which has been reactivated. Malindi 1044 remains off the air. Garissa 567 and 639 are active, but irregular.

A recently-leaked report by the official audit office says the KBC is technically insolvent and cannot afford to repay huge loans it has taken out or to pay statutory deductions such as VAT, PAYE and pensions. The expansion of private FM stations continues. Nairobi alone now has more than 40 FM stations. The KBC has surrendered some of its FM frequencies to make way for private stations.

MADAGASCAR

Confirmed active on 3288, 5010 and 6135. 3288 and 5010 were heard in parallel in the evenings. As others have reported, 5010 was heard sometimes in USB+carrier mode. However, it was also heard at least once in conventional DSB mode. 6135 is slightly off-channel.

On one occasion I heard a station on 7105 at 1130 but it was too weak to confirm whether it was Madagascar, which is listed on that frequency.

Checking 9690 regularly, I heard Voice of Nigeria, rather than Madagascar, also listed on that channel.



NIGERIA

Both Kaduna stations (4770 and 6090) were heard. 4770 has news in English at 0500. 6090 was heard after co-channel Ethiopia closed at 0600.

RWANDA

Radio Rwanda was heard regularly on 6055, including news in English as scheduled at 0515 and 1830. This SW relay of the FM service still takes a weekday break at 0600-0900.

SOMALIA

No SW activity was heard. Nothing was heard of the reportedly reactivated Radio Hargeysa SW service on 7120.

SUDAN State radio was heard regularly on 7200.

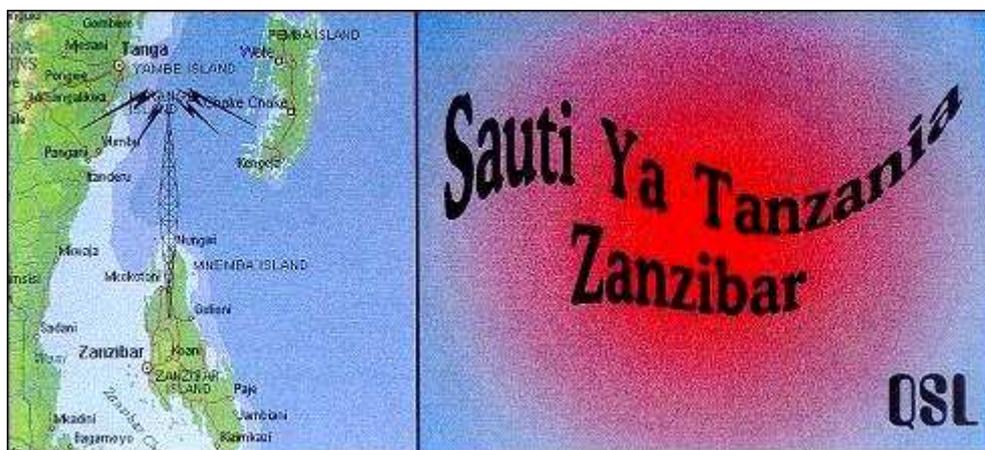
Southern Sudan Radio from Juba on 693 was heard with good reception after dark. News in English is at 1530. (Since 2005, South Sudan has had its own government, with a high degree of independence from the central government in Khartoum. A referendum is due to be held in 2011 on whether South Sudan should have full independence)

Radio Peace from southern Sudan was heard irregularly in the early mornings on 4750 with Christian programming in Arabic and English. However, it was not heard for several days running in the last week of December. It was not heard at all on 5895.

TANZANIA

Mainland: Former Radio Tanzania (or RTD - Radio Tanzania - Dar es Salaam) is now IDing as TBC or TBC Taifa (= Nation). It is no longer broadcasting on SW. It was heard on 603, 621, 648, 657, 711, 720 and 1215 (not 1214).

Zanzibar: Sauti ya Tanzania (Voice of Tanzania) has a noticeable hum on its SW transmitter, heard on 6015 mornings and 11735 evenings. The transmitter is also somewhat irregular in operation. Unfortunately, the morning (0300-0600) reception of Zanzibar on 6015 was spoiled by co-channel BBC Arabic at 0300-0500 and BBC Turkish at 0500-0530.



left: 2002 Zanzibar QSL received by George Brown.

UGANDA

UBC Radio (formerly Radio Uganda) was heard running a single SW transmitter on 4976/7195. 4976 often seemed especially weak, especially as I was listening only about 130 miles from Kampala. I'm sure it is running well below the listed 10 kW.

I was interested to hear a very weak but clear parallel UBC signal on 909, as I had thought that all Ugandan MW transmitters were inactive.

I expect that once the modernisation of the MW network has been completed, UBC will close its SW service.

Radio Dunamis on 4750 was heard with excellent reception in the evening.

ZAMBIA

ZNBC was heard regularly on 5915 and 6165.

ZIMBABWE

Despite the problems in the country, the ZBC is managing to keep two SW transmitters on the air. Radio Zimbabwe was heard on 3396 or 6045 while Voice of Zimbabwe was heard on 4828 or 5975 (though VoZ was only ever heard with continuous music). The switchover times between the daytime and nighttime frequencies was inconsistent. It seems that sometimes they leave 6045 on through the night rather than switch to 3396. Reception on 3396 could be especially good during the evening. I heard an advert for a car auction "by barter" - no doubt because cash auctions are now impossible in a country where hyperinflation means that the currency loses half its value each day.

I heard the exiled stations SW Radio Africa, Radio Voice of the People and Studio 7 on all their listed frequencies. Studio 7 said it was being jammed on 909 mediumwave and advised listeners to tune to one of its three SW frequencies instead. I did not hear any definite jamming on 909, though there was an unidentified carrier on 910 causing a whistle, which might have been a jammer.



I did hear some jamming of SW Radio Africa on 4880. The jamming was either of the "bubble" type or was a carrier rapidly moving in discrete steps on the high side of 4880, causing random interfering tones. Switching to LSB mode eliminated the jamming noise. The jamming on 4880 was intermittent. More of a problem was co-channel interference from India