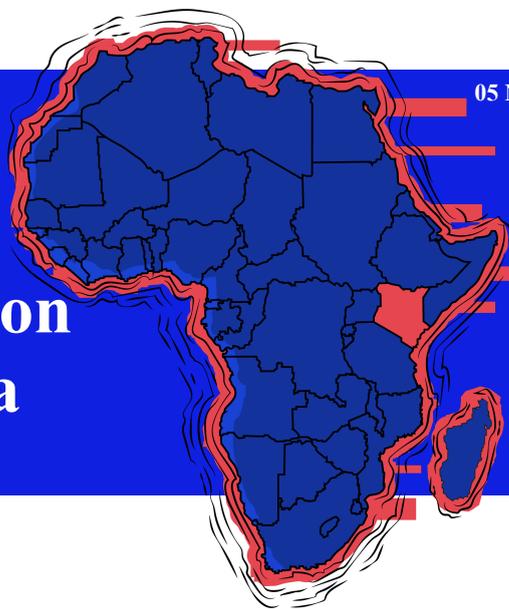


**Pulse Report**

# Biweekly overview of information manipulation & interference in Kenya



*This **PULSE Report** is a biweekly analysis of coordinated online hate speech, cyberbullying and trolling, information manipulation, and other online harms, as well as the abuse of artificial intelligence (AI) technologies to target vulnerable communities or subvert public discourse in Kenya. It also identifies weaponised narratives and the key actors undermining information integrity. It analyses the tactics or techniques used to subvert or polarise local audiences.*

## I. Executive summary

The Kenya Medical Research Institute's (KEMRI) launch of a Gates Foundation-funded women's health research programme led to the resurgence of long-standing narratives that have framed such programmes as depopulation schemes and Africans being used as test subjects for foreign-led medical research.

Unsubstantiated claims alleging that president William Ruto's administration was granting refugees in Dadaab and Kakuma camps Kenyan citizenship and voting rights under the United Nations (UN)-backed Shirika Plan to secure electoral gains in 2027 spread on TikTok.

Ethnic tensions escalated after Nyeri governor Mutahi Kahiga's remarks at a burial seemingly celebrated the death of former prime minister Raila Odinga. Mentions of Luos and Kikuyus on Facebook, TikTok and X reached millions of views, accompanied by hate speech and calls for tribal violence. Some users claimed the government was using Kahiga to drive division between the two. The online backlash culminated in a public apology and Kahiga's resignation as vice chair of the Council of Governors.

### Notable narratives and incidents

*A narrative is a technique for presenting or understanding a situation or series of events, promoting a particular viewpoint. Information manipulators develop 'persistent' narratives that play on emotions, fears, or pre-existing beliefs to inject an ideological spin on the facts, manipulate public perceptions, and exploit cognitive biases that shape public opinion.*

- a. **Refugees are being granted Kenyan citizenship and voting rights:** A viral TikTok falsely claimed Ruto grants refugees citizenship and votes through the Shirika Plan. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and government statements confirm it does not.
- b. **Gates-funded research is part of a depopulation agenda:** X narratives falsely linked a Gates Foundation-funded KEMRI project to a 'depopulation agenda', misusing United States litigation as a launching pad.

- c. **Government uses ethnic tension for its own gains:** On 21 October 2025, Kahiga’s remarks supposedly celebrating Odinga’s death sparked ethnic hate speech between Luos and Kikuyus across social media and led to his resignation as vice chair of the Council of Governors. Some users claim he was used by the government to sow division.

### County radar: The notable emerging incidents or campaigns at the county level

*This section provides a concise overview of notable incidents, campaigns, and insights into emerging trends and issues in the information landscape within the focus counties (Busia, Homa Bay, Lamu, Mombasa, Nairobi, and Nakuru). It aims to inform readers about the emerging conversations shaping public discourse in these countries.*

- a. **The coming presidential election in Lamu is nothing but ethnic arithmetic:** On 26 September 2025, Yunus Is’hakia Ahmed posted in a Facebook group using long-standing ethnic tension to accuse Kikuyus of greed and internal colonisation. He tagged his ‘mentor’ Khelef Khalifa, who has faced a National Cohesion and Integration Commission (NCIC) summons for hate speech.

### Key actors

*An actor is a person, group, company, or nation-state that acts with deliberate purpose. Information manipulators are considered bad actors who purposely and repeatedly engage in manipulative or disruptive behaviour, which is usually to radicalise, polarise, or subvert the public.*

#### Individual actors:

- a. **@AfroEconomicus:** Also known as Africanus, a mid-tier policy influencer with 62,935 followers on X, amplified conspiracy narratives linking the Gates Foundation to population control and medical experiments in Africa, claiming that ‘Africa has turned into Bill Gates’ medical lab’.
- b. **@\_James041:** Also known as I am Chege, a nationalist commentator with 87,836 followers, shared viral videos alleging that Depo-Provera sterilises African women and accused Gates of pursuing a ‘bioterrorist depopulation agenda.’

#### Noteworthy tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTPs):

*TTPs describe the behaviour and strategies threat actors use, focusing on the structured frameworks or infrastructure they use for executing cyberattacks. Using TTPs to diagnose information manipulation allows investigators to develop early warning systems. It also allows watchdogs to identify vulnerabilities in influence operations that can be used to disrupt the attack.*

- a. **Leverage conspiracy theory narratives:** The Disinformation and Risk Management (DISARM) framework identifies this tactic as invoking sinister actors for political goals, seen in Galma Dido’s TikTok video falsely claiming the Shirika Plan grants refugees citizenship and 2027 votes, and in X posts claiming a Gates-funded KEMRI project is part of a ‘depopulation agenda’

## 2. Weaponised words: the narratives and incidents shaping public discourse

*This section highlights amplified ‘meta’ narratives, citing specific examples and listing a selection of the most noteworthy incidents or narratives.*

### a. Refugees are being granted Kenyan citizenship and voting rights under the UN-backed Shirika plan *(Analysis by Moffin Njoroge)*

On 10 October 2025, Galma Dido, a fellow of the Danish International Development Agency, posted a TikTok [video](#) in which he claimed that president Ruto and his administration’s ‘obsession’ with the abolition of extra ID vetting in border counties enables refugees in Dadaab and Kakuma camps to obtain Kenyan citizenship and voting rights under the UN-backed [Shirika Plan](#). The plan is a 12-year initiative launched in March 2025 to integrate refugees into host communities. The video claims that Ruto is eyeing the new votes that will come from the refugees to bolster his bid in the 2027 general elections.

The video received 11,935 interactions and 97,001 views. Comments in the video expressed concerns on the rising number of neighbouring foreign nationals in the country. One comment said: ‘huyu mtu akufe tu aki. have you people seen the number of Burundians, rwandese, Sudanese, Somalis and Congolese. undocumented foreigners.’ The first phrase, which is in Swahili, translates to ‘this person [Ruto] should just die’. Another comment said: ‘that’s like 2 million votes for non kenyans 🙄 to decide our fate...’, while a third comment read: ‘Palestine ilianza ivo ivo.sasa refugees wanaua Palestine’s kama wanyama 🤡🤡’ (‘It started the same way in Palestine, now the refugees are killing Palestinians like animals’. Dido’s video was also [posted](#) by the X account [@vinguard254](#) on 11 October 2025, receiving a total engagement of 16,800 and 328,300 views. The video was also posted in a Facebook [post](#) and on a Facebook [reel](#) (1,2). The post received 25 interactions and 813 views while the reel received 316 interactions and 5,100 views.



*Screenshot of Dido’s TikTok [video](#) on the Shirika plan (Source: CfA using TikTok)*

While both the [UNHCR](#) and Kenyan [government](#) documents focus on increasing inclusivity and opportunities for refugees, there is no mention of granting them Kenyan citizenship or voting rights.

An X [post](#) used Grok to verify the video's accuracy. It said that Dido was mixing facts with unsubstantiated claims. The post further adds that the 12-year Shirika plan focuses on socioeconomic inclusion, not citizenship or voting rights. The post received a total of 8 engagements and 1,208 views.

A TikTok [video](#) posted on 24 July 2025 by a South Sudanese living in Kenya said that the initiative meant refugees would now be granted work permits and get access to higher education and medical cover. The video received 2,008 interactions and 31,300 views. While there were conflicting reactions to the plan in the comments, there was consensus on lack of support for the work permits, asking if the government had created enough jobs for Kenyans before it considered refugees. One of the comments said: 'Shirika plan is a shitty initiative. It is not beneficial to any refugee, "Access to jobs" which job, in Kakuma, if there were jobs in Kakuma, Turkana people would be working. Kenyans are crying for jobs everyday, where are'. Another comment said: 'The education and medical part is all good. But are they creating more job opportunities? Integration is a good idea though.' A different comment said: 'Kenya is sinking and they want to dump hundreds of thousands of jobless people in the economy. that is a bad idea.'

#### **b. Gates-funded research is part of a depopulation agenda** *(Analysis by Ivy)*

A real class-action lawsuit in the United States concerning the Depo-Provera birth control injection and alleged meningioma risk became the foundation for false claims that global health programmes are designed to 'sterilise' or reduce African populations. Between 09 and 20 October 2025, posts on X repurposed this litigation to push the narrative that Africa is being used as a 'testing ground' and that Kenyan women were being turned into 'lab rats' for foreign contraceptive experiments. The activity spiked after the [announcement](#) of a \$4 million Gates Foundation-funded women's health research partnership at KEMRI on 11 October 2025.

The three-year Leadership for Innovation and Excellence in Accelerating Research on Women's Health (LEA-WH) [programme](#), aims to advance research and innovation across Africa.

Soon after the announcement, however, users began [connecting](#) the KEMRI partnership to a 'depopulation agenda', referencing an earlier thread by a US-based [account](#) that highlighted the Depo-Provera litigation with the opening statement: 'The Bill Gates Depopulation Agenda STRIKES AGAIN.' The lawsuit, however, is against drug manufacturer Pfizer.

Others [amplified](#) video clips claiming Kenya was being turned into an 'open-air laboratory' for contraceptive experiments and [warned](#) viewers to reject 'Bill Gates' 'murderous agenda'. Additional posts [linked](#) these claims to prior Covid-19 vaccine conspiracies, including allegations that the AstraZeneca vaccine caused paralysis and was part of a broader 'Bill Gates plot'. Similar content [framed](#) Africa as a testing ground for 'Gates Foundation contraceptives' and [accused](#) Kenyan institutions of 'signing deals with the devil'. Others [generalised](#) that 'nothing good' comes from the philanthropist and [warned](#) that such projects sought to 'eradicate' Africans.

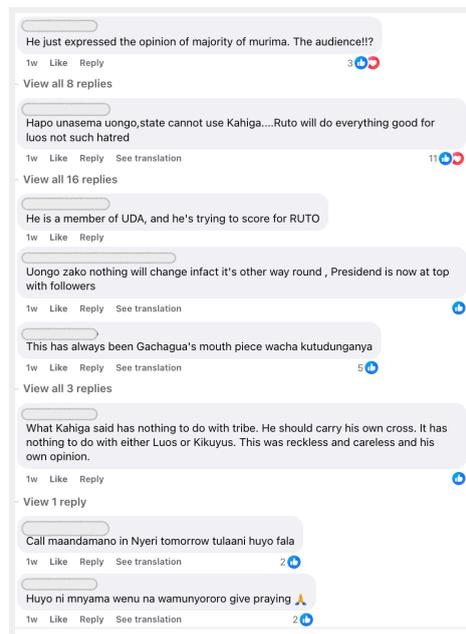
A widely shared [clip](#) with more than 8,700 views reinforced the narrative by recounting the story of a woman who developed a brain tumour after years of using Depo-Provera, implying that a similar fate awaited African women. The class-action lawsuit against Pfizer is genuine but limited to US proceedings concerning the drug's warning label and alleged meningioma risk, as [reported](#) by The

Guardian in September 2025. None of the evidence or filings connect the case to African research programmes nor the KEMRI initiative.

**c. Government is using ethnic tension for gains** (*Analysis by Agape Karashi*)

On 21 October 2025, Kahiga, while attending a burial ceremony in Kieni Constituency in Nyeri, was [captured](#) speaking in Kikuyu, making remarks that appeared to celebrate the death of the late Odinga. Kahiga, who is Kikuyu, stated that Odinga's death was God's plan to return development to Mt Kenya, a region predominantly inhabited by the Kikuyu community. He said that national development had been concentrated in the Nyanza region, predominantly occupied by the Luo community, where Odinga hailed from. His comments reflected deep-seated ethnic divisions between the Luo and Kikuyu communities.

Between 21 and 31 October 2025, there were 34,918 mentions of Luos and Kikuyus on X, garnering six million views and 183,000 interactions. On Facebook, the same conversation generated 4.2 million views and 165,400 reactions, while on TikTok, five videos related to the incident accumulated 648,722 views and 37,502 interactions. One user [alleged](#) that Kahiga was being used by the government to create division between the Kikuyu and Luo communities. Another user [suggested](#) that political manipulation in Kenya operates by funding hate between communities, amplifying it through the media, and letting citizens tear each other apart. It was also [acknowledged](#) as a psychological operation that will help Ruto gain the Luo votes in the 2027 elections as the post read: 'We need better psyops @WilliamsRuto @DavidNdii @MutahiNgunyi @HonMoses\_Kuria . You old useless bastards are running out of tricks. Go back to the drawing board and think up something solid.'

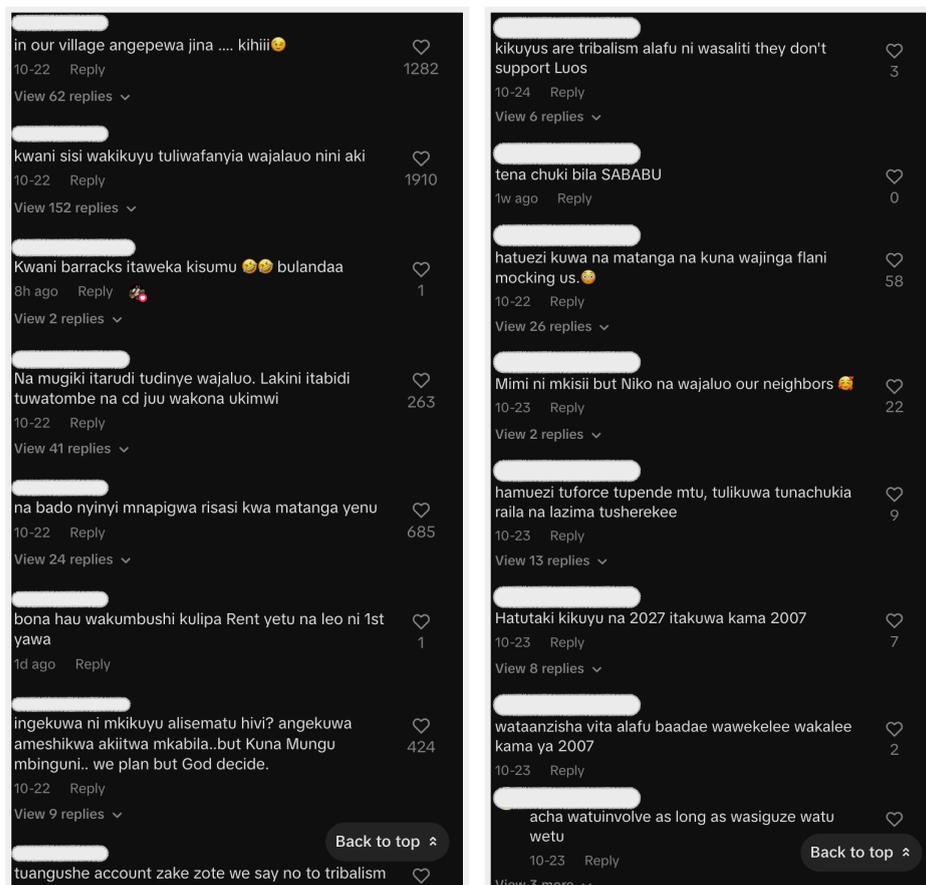


Govt is using such character to plant division before 2027 that's why kahiga episode took place, plus govt bloggers

Sample comments alleging Kahiga is being used to stir divisions ([top](#), [bottom](#)) (Source: CfA using Facebook and X)

In response to Kahiga’s speech, a TikTok [post](#) alleged that the Kikuyu community had taken an oath in the 1960s to hate the Luo community. The post emphasised that Luos did not harbour hatred toward Kikuyus, citing instances where Odinga supported former presidents Mwai Kibaki and Uhuru Kenyatta, both from the Kikuyu community. It also noted that Odinga mourned and comforted Rigathi Gachagua, the former deputy president, when he lost his brother. The post questioned Gachagua’s silence following Odinga’s death and alleged that Kahiga is his close ally, portraying it as evidence of enduring hostility toward the Luo community.

The post further urged [Raymond Omollo](#), the principal secretary for the Ministry of Interior and National Administration, to recruit more Luos into the army and police force so they could deal with Kikuyus during protests anticipated in the 2027 elections. Four ([1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#)) posts on TikTok shared the same video, accumulating 102,100 views and 3,960 interactions. In retaliation, a Kikuyu user referred to the speaker (seemingly a Luo) as a ‘kihiii’, a derogatory term meaning uncircumcised, while another made a sexualised comment implying the need for condoms because Luos have HIV/AIDS. These exchanges illustrate the escalation of ethnic hate speech between the two communities on social media.



Sample comments on the suggestion that Luos should be recruited into the army and police ([left](#), [right](#)) (Source: CFA using TikTok)

Chairperson of the Kenya Airports Authority [Caleb Kositany](#) publicly [condemned](#) Kahiga’s statement, saying the governor had ‘crossed the red line’ and called for his resignation. However, several users criticised Kositany for what they [perceived](#) as hypocrisy, questioning why he had not similarly condemned [Oscar Sudi](#), the member of parliament for Kapsaret Constituency, when Sudi previously

[insulted](#) Odinga after his electoral losses. Both Kositany and Sudi are members of the Kalenjin community, and users noted this apparent selective outrage and political inconsistency.



*Sample comments on Kositany's response ([top](#), [bottom](#))  
(Source: CfA using X)*

Following widespread backlash, on 22 October 2025, Kahiga [issued](#) a public apology, resigned as vice chair of the Council of Governors, and stated that his remarks were misunderstood and not intended to be celebratory. Between 21 and 31 October 2025, mentions of Kahiga related to his comments on Odinga's death reached 40,890 on X, generating 12 million views and 263,000 interactions. On Facebook, the same discussion recorded 5.3 million views and 238,200 reactions, while nine ([1](#), [2](#), [3](#)) TikTok videos amassed 2.5 million views and 82,734 interactions.

### 3. County radar: Notable emerging incidents or campaigns from the county level

*This section provides a concise overview of notable incidents, campaigns, and insights into emerging trends and issues in the information landscape within the focus counties. It aims to inform readers about the emerging conversations shaping public discourse in these counties.*

#### a. **The coming presidential election in Lamu is nothing but ethnic arithmetic** (*Analysis by Moffin Njoroge*)

On 26 September 2025, a Facebook [post](#) published in the public group [Lamu County Politics](#) by one of the administrators, [Yunus Is'hakia Ahmed](#), an actor already in CfA's watchlist, said: 'The coming presidential election in Lamu is nothing but ethnic arithmetic. The Lamu indigenous communities will stand with President William Samoei Ruto while outsiders from Morrima will cling to their tribal blocs for selfish gain. One fact is undeniable: Kikuyus must end their insatiable greed for political power and their exploitative role as internal colonisers.'

Here, he means that the non-native Kikuyu community in Lamu, whom he refers to as 'outsiders from Morrima [Mt Kenya]' would cling to tribal politics, implying support for impeached deputy president Gachagua, who is from the Kikuyu community.

[Tensions](#) between indigenous communities and migrant Kikuyus who moved to the county as part of settlement schemes in the 1960s have been ongoing. [Tribal narratives](#) against Kikuyus in Lamu keep emerging, especially as elections draw nearer.

Ahmed added that his ‘Godfather, mentor or boss’ was Khelef Khalifa, the director of the Mombasa-based NGO Muslims for Human Rights, whom he had [tagged](#) in the post.

Khalifa was [summoned](#) by the NCIC over utterances deemed to be bordering on ethnic contempt, hate speech, and discrimination targeting the Kikuyu community in Lamu on 22 November 2024 in a public baraza that CfA reported on in previous reports. The post received 45 reactions and 2,100 views.

#### 4. Actor spotlight: The people and organisations amplifying toxic content

*This section highlights the key accounts, entities, or actors involved in amplifying toxic online content in Kenya and provides an in-depth assessment of their identities and motivations.*

##### a. [@AfroEconomicus](#) (Analysis by Ivy)

The X account [@AfroEconomicus](#), also known as Africanus, describes itself as a commentator on economics, governance, health, and geopolitics. Created in June 2014, the account follows about 15,000 accounts and has 62,935 followers, positioning it as a mid-tier influencer within Kenyan policy and economic discourse. In 2025, the account published 21 posts mentioning Bill Gates, collectively generating 3,929 views and 80 engagements, with the most viral post receiving 43 engagements and 2,106 views.

The account has been central in advancing conspiracy theories linking the Gates Foundation to alleged population control schemes and the covert manipulation of African health systems. In an October 2025 post that garnered 2,074 views and 43 engagements, Africanus [claimed](#) that ‘Africa has turned into Bill Gates’ medical lab with Kenyans as lab rats for experimental drugs’. In another post that garnered 148 views and three engagements, the user echoed and [amplified](#) a [viral video](#) by [@\\_James041](#) that alleged a ‘murderous agenda’ behind contraceptive research in Kenya. The video itself [recounted](#) claims about Depo-Provera lawsuits in the US, falsely implying that KEMRI’s partnership with the Gates Foundation was part of an experiment on African women.

##### b. [@\\_James041](#) (Analysis by Ivy)

The X account [@\\_James041](#), which identifies itself as I am Chege, describes its owner as an ‘active citizen’ and ‘justice seeker’. Created in June 2023, the account has grown rapidly to 87,836 followers and 820 followings, making it one of the more influential nationalist-leaning voices within Kenya’s online political conversation. In 2025, the account mentioned Gates 43 times, generating 516,335 views and 25,244 engagements across posts that merged anti-philanthropic and anti-vaccine rhetoric with populist appeals to sovereignty and moral outrage.

Between September and October 2025, the account intensified its output around the Depo-Provera controversy, publishing multiple posts framing Gates as a bioterrorist with a depopulation agenda. In a widely circulated [post](#) accompanied by a Statista fertility-rate map, the user alleged that Gates was ‘camping in Africa with his vaccines’ to lower fertility rates, urging followers to ‘reject Bill Gates vaccines’ and ‘say no to Bill Gates birth-control agenda’. The post garnered 2,014 views and 149 engagements.

Another [post](#), which garnered 4,938 views and 263 engagements, cited Burkina Faso’s purported rejection of a Gates-funded malaria project as proof that ‘a man with a depopulation agenda cannot be trusted with human lives’, echoing recurring anti-vaccine sovereignty narratives that portray African governments as victims of Western biomedical control. A separate [post](#) drew on a genuine 2004 FDA black-box warning about bone-density loss from the contraceptive Depo-Provera to argue that Gates and the Kenyan Ministry of Health were colluding in ‘bioterrorist’ experiments against women, omitting that the warning relates to dosage and duration, not to sterilisation or cancer risk. This post garnered 3,603 views and 125 engagements.

The account also shared both the [five-minute clip](#), which got 8,603 views and 717 engagements, and the [two-minute video](#), which got 139,243 views and 5,274 engagements, alleging that Pfizer’s contraceptive Depo-Provera ‘sterilises African women’ and that Gates orchestrates global experiments under the guise of philanthropy.

## 5. Tactics and techniques: unveiling the actors’ modus operandi

*This section outlines the tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTPs) used by actors in the identified narratives. It focuses on strategically disseminating content and coordinating its online presence.*

### a. Leverage conspiracy theory narratives (Analysis by Moffin Njoroge and Ivy)

The DISARM framework defines this [tactic](#) as appealing to the human desire for explanatory order by invoking the participation of powerful (often sinister) actors in pursuit of their own political goals. The TikTok [video](#) by Galma Dido falsely spreads the narrative that the Kenyan government is using the Shirika plan to register refugees as Kenyan citizens who would, in turn, vote for Ruto in the 2027 general elections.

The false allegations linking the plan to voter registration emanate from existing [online attacks](#) against the Somali community and other border communities and [criticism](#) of the government after president Ruto announced the abolishment of vetting for identification cards in border regions on 05 February 2025 in Wajir County. The abolishment of vetting has been [seen](#) by some as a political strategy to win over the Kenyan Somali constituency.

Similarly, this tactic was used to advance the ‘Bill Gates depopulation agenda’ narrative, which frames global health partnerships as covert efforts to experiment on or reduce African populations.

## 6. Conclusion

October’s information landscape in Kenya was marked by the convergence of politically charged misinformation, health-related conspiracies, and ethnic hate speech – each reinforcing deep social and political fault lines. False claims around the Shirika Plan and Gates Foundation partnerships illustrate how online narratives can inflame distrust in government and institutions, whereas the reaction to Kahiga’s comments reveals how powerful social media can be, especially in the run-up to elections.

Monitoring these narratives remains crucial to identifying coordinated disinformation patterns early on.

*This report was written by Code for Africa (CfA) iLAB investigative data analysts **Nirali Patel, Dorcas Solonka, Moffin Njoroge, Agape Karashi, and Ivy Masese**. The report was reviewed by iLAB investigations manager **Jacktone Momanyi**, and edited by iLAB chief copy editor **Leizl Eykelhof**. The research was overseen by CfA iLAB editor **Athandiwe Saba** and commissioned by CfA editor-in-chief **Justin Arenstein**.*

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*Do you know of incidents of suspected information manipulation, coordinated influence operations or other forms of disinformation or weaponised toxic content that you think we should investigate? Share your leads with us, securely, on [ilab@codeforafrica.org](mailto:ilab@codeforafrica.org).*



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*This report contributes to a growing knowledge base that documents African-focused information manipulation, influence operations, and weaponised disinformation. The knowledge base is curated by the **African Digital Democracy Observatory (ADDO)**. The research in this specific report was produced by analysts attached to ADDO member Code for Africa (CfA), including CfA's **CivicSignal** media monitoring lab, its **iLAB** forensic investigation unit, and its **PesaCheck** fact-checking team.*