



**THE  
IMPACT  
PROGRAMME**

# DEEP DIVE: HIVISASA INSIGHTS

**COMPANY:** HiviSasa (Mobile Web Ltd) **SECTOR:** ICT **COUNTRY:** Kenya **FUND:** Novastar Ventures East Africa Fund I

Impact Programme Deep Dives use a stakeholder-centric approach to measurement. They gather feedback on the products and services produced by companies (known as 'outputs'), and the material effect of these products and services on people's lives ('outcomes').

Research is based on five key principles:

- **Participatory.** Listening to data needs across companies, fund managers and asset owners to focus on metrics that can be decision-useful for all parties.
- **Value-added.** Helping businesses understand how they are creating value for their customers, suppliers and employees.
- **Right-sized.** Using research methods that are proportionate to the scale of impact and aligned with company culture.
- **Confidential.** Ensuring the safety of commercially sensitive data, and protecting the right of respondents to anonymity.
- **Independent.** Engaging researchers external to company and fund management to reduce bias and boost impartiality.

Deep Dive findings inform portfolio-wide impact reporting, and feed into business strategy and operations – helping to improve customer segmentation, supply chain management, brand positioning and marketing.

**Deep Dives** are in-depth research on the social performance of portfolio companies in the [CDC Impact Fund](#), which is part of [the DFID Impact Programme](#). Each Deep Dive collects data from people experiencing impact. This information is then turned into insights for both businesses and their investors – as well as generating learning for the wider impact investing market.

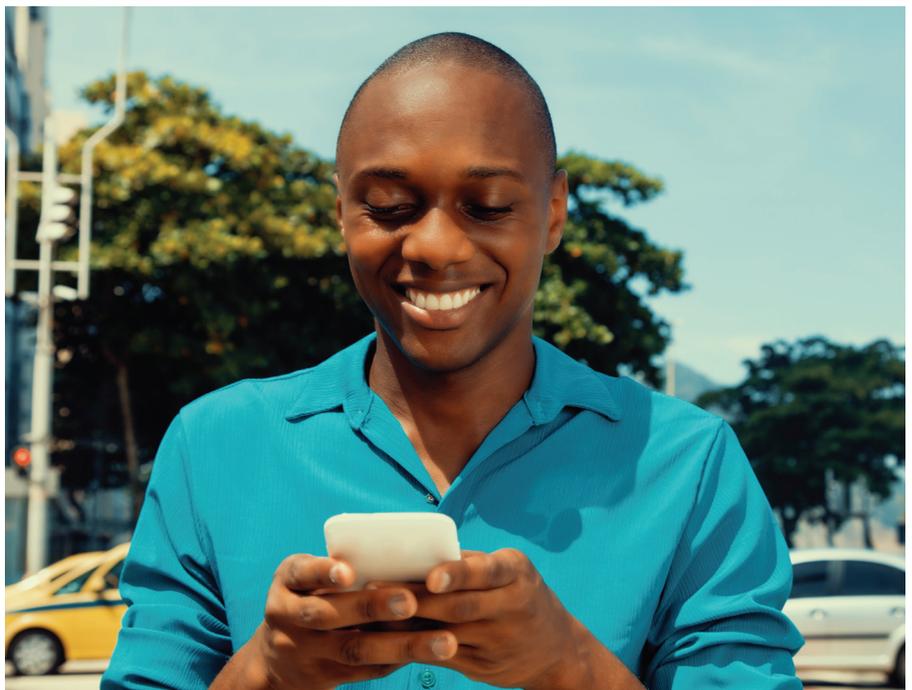
## HEADLINE IMPACT

- HiviSasa provides local media content, filling a missing niche for news in Kenya.
- HiviSasa has a wide geographic reader base, with county readership closely matched to Kenyan demographics.
- HiviSasa readers are more politically engaged than non-readers, voting more and discussing politics more both offline and online. Evidence suggests that this is directly due to HiviSasa's content.
- Despite research in other countries finding that the consumption of news media can increase political polarisation, there are no signs that HiviSasa increases ethnic or political polarisation.

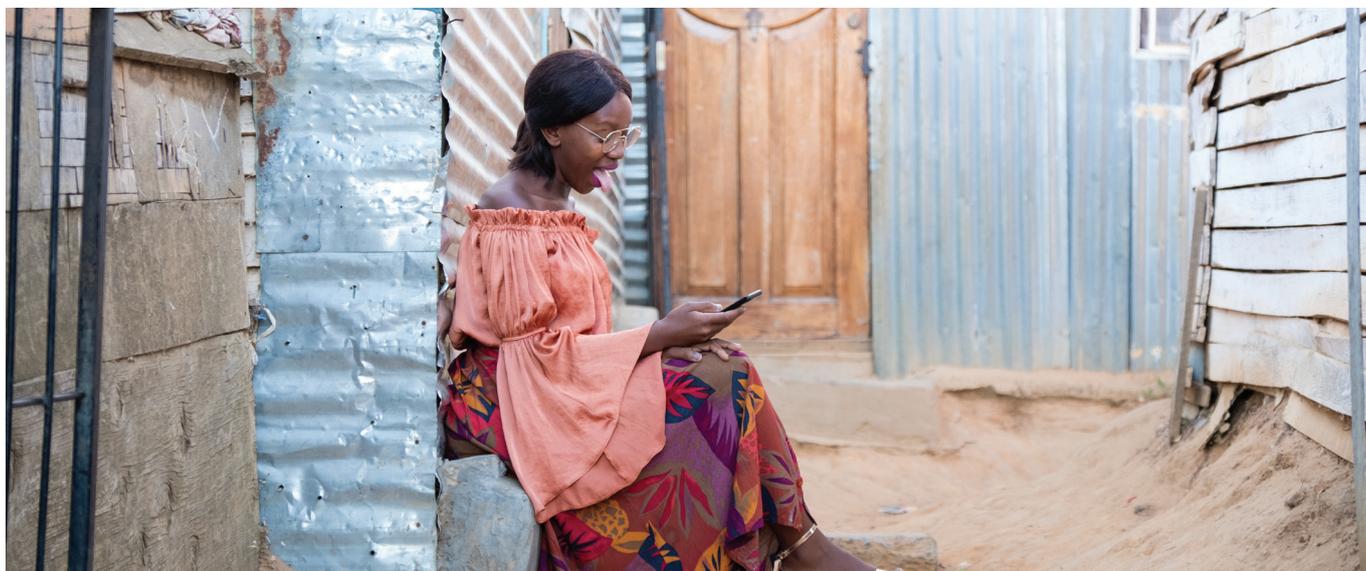
## COMPANY OVERVIEW

HiviSasa is an online media platform headquartered in Kenya, which focuses on producing fast-paced, relevant news. In particular, HiviSasa focuses on producing content for sub-national geographic areas, for example Kenyan counties, in order to improve knowledge of sub-national politics and events, and to support a vibrant civil society at all administrative levels.

HiviSasa is a portfolio company of Novastar, a venture catalyst firm that has received investment from the CDC Impact Fund<sup>1</sup>.



<sup>1</sup> CDC's Impact Fund invests in funds and other intermediated vehicles that deliver high development impact. In 2014, CDC made a \$15 million commitment to the Novastar Ventures East Africa Fund



## RESEARCH FOCUS

Despite a move to decentralise government in several developing countries, including Kenya, political and social news tends to focus on national and international level stories to the detriment of sub-national news. This in turn hinders civil society's ability to hold sub-national governments to account.

HiviSasa aims to produce high-quality, highly-demanded news articles. To support this objective, HiviSasa sought an analysis of user perceptions, and of the impact of the online newspaper on its readers.

This involved carrying out research to understand four dimensions of impact: *Who* is reading Hivisasa, *what impact* do articles have on these readers, *how much* change is occurring, and what is the *contribution* of HiviSasa to this change?

The multi-stakeholder [Impact Management Project](#) considers five dimensions of company impact on people and planet:

- **Who** experiences change, and how underserved are they?
- **What** outcomes does the change relate to, and how important they are to the people (or planet) experiencing it?
- **How much.** How much of the change occurs in the time period in terms of depth, scale and duration?
- **Contribution.** How does the change compare and contribute to what is likely to occur anyway?
- **Risk.** How likely is the outcome to be different from what is expected?

To answer these questions the Impact Programme engaged the [Busara Center for Behavioral Economics](#), who conducted:

- A phone survey with a representative sample of 453 HiviSasa readers and 300 non-readers
- In-person data collection with 15 highly-engaged HiviSasa users
- A Randomized Controlled Trial (RCT) analysing the impact of HiviSasa on its readers. This used a number of behaviourally informed measures in a decision lab setting.

This research was conducted over a five-month period from March to July 2018.

## RESEARCH FINDINGS

- **HiviSasa has a geographically diverse readership.** HiviSasa's usage base closely maps the Kenyan population, with no evidence of a skew towards urban and higher income areas. For example, 8.6% of Kenya's population resides in Nairobi City<sup>2</sup>, compared to a slightly higher 10.9% of HiviSasa's Kenyan readers. A much poorer area, Busia county, has 1.2% of Kenya's population, and 4% of HiviSasa's readers.
- **HiviSasa's readers are typically low-income,** but not in poverty. While 9.1% of HiviSasa readers fall below the international poverty line (\$1.90 a day), 70% have an income of less than \$150 per month.
- **Kenyan news consumers demand sub-national news.** Local politics is the second favourite news topic (out of 16 potential options) for HiviSasa readers, following national politics.

"[HiviSasa] talked about if you want change, you have to be the one to make it and it can only be made through voting"

HiviSasa readers

- **HiviSasa readers are politically engaged.** Readers are more likely than non-readers to have voted in the last Kenyan election, and to keep up with politics. During behavioural experiment, those participants assigned to reading HiviSasa were more likely to discuss politics on and off the platform, suggesting a causal relationship rather than simple correlation. Several readers reported receiving much of their political information from HiviSasa, which in turn spurred on political discussions online and offline, and in some cases led to actions taken, for example contacting politicians or voting.

<sup>2</sup> Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, 2012

- **There is no evidence that HiviSasa articles lead to ethnic or political polarisation.** Despite studies<sup>3</sup> linking consumption of news media to political and/or ethnic divisions, no effect was seen in this direction. In a decision lab game played with randomly assigned HiviSasa readers and non-readers, there was no difference in bias towards one ethnicity in either group. In other words, readers and non-readers both tend to be equally altruistic towards their own ethnic group and other ethnic groups.
- **HiviSasa may increase its readers' self-efficacy,** which is an individual's beliefs regarding their capabilities to accomplish tasks or succeed in situations. HiviSasa readers tend to be more confident in their capabilities to accomplish tasks or succeed in the situations that they face<sup>4</sup>.
- **HiviSasa has supported readers in their entrepreneurial activities.** A common story in the interviews with HiviSasa users was that HiviSasa articles have driven them to start, expand, and maintain entrepreneurial activities, both through increased self-efficacy, and through providing examples of successful businesses.

### WHAT HAPPENED NEXT?

These findings gave HiviSasa new insights into its readership, their preferred content, and the ways in which HiviSasa content impacts the life of Kenyan citizens. This project also provided HiviSasa with the tools to continue using data to drive decision-making on an everyday basis. As part of the research, the Busara Center constructed a data tool to support the visualization and usage of HiviSasa's data on readers and contributors. HiviSasa is currently working to provide segmented offerings to better target content to a heterogeneous customer base, and is keen to continue utilising research in its business strategy and everyday decision making.

<sup>3</sup> For example Gerber, Karlan and Bergan, 2009

<sup>4</sup> On an index of 0 to 1, consumers of local HiviSasa content revealed an average self-efficacy of 0.93, compared to 0.82 in the control group.

"I think in my case I could be having an idea and thought it can never happen but after reading that article, I realised anything is possible."

*HiviSasa reader in Nakuru*

"Right now I have an electric business that was not doing good, [HiviSasa] has motivated me into putting more effort."

*HiviSasa reader in Nairobi*



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