

BY DAVID SEKAYINGA

KALANGALA. The Uganda Communications Commission (UCC) has declared that all community radios or outdoor megaphones, locally known as *bizindalo* operating in Kalangala District, are illegal, warning that individuals or groups found using them without authorisation risk arrest.

Last week, a team of UCC officials led by Mr Dennis Okalanga, the UCC head of legal department, met Kalangala District leadership and discussed the fate of more than 250 outdoor megaphone radios currently operating across the island district.

The discussion followed a decision by the RDC's office last month to temporarily lift a ban that had earlier been imposed on the use of devices to mobilise communities.

According to Mr Okalanga, the *bizindalo* are operating in contravention of Section 27 of the Uganda Communications Act, which requires any person or entity providing broadcasting services to first obtain a license from the commission.

The programming of *bizindalo* radios consists mostly of local announcements on lost or found property, lost children, market information, adverts, talk shows, sermons, community mobilisation, local employment opportunities, education, and health information.

Mr Okalanga explained despite that, they still fall under broadcasting services and must therefore comply with the law.

"Any person who wishes to operate such communication equipment must first seek authorisation and licensing from the commission. Operating without a license is illegal," he said.

In Kalangala, *bizindalo* are widely used in trading centres, landing sites,

Outdoor community radios illegal – UCC



RDC Fred Badda (in red) speaks to residents during a sensitisation session on the use of community radios and megaphones at Kitobo Landing Site on January 12, 2026. PHOTO/DAVID SEKAYINGA

and villages to relay community announcements, advertise local businesses, broadcast church messages, and mobilise residents for health programmes.

Mr Richard Kirwaana, one of the operators, said the *bizindalo* remains the most accessible source of information for many islanders.

"Not everyone owns a smartphone or has access to radio or television signals. Most people get information through these megaphones," he said.

He added that the *bizindalo* play a

THE LAW

According to Section 26(1) of the UCC Act 2013, "A person shall not install or operate a television station, radio station, or any related broadcasting apparatus without a license issued by the Commission".

crucial role in mobilising communities for immunisation campaigns, health

camp, and government programmes such as the distribution of hand hoes. Kilwaana appealed to UCC to consider the communication challenges faced in remote island communities.

"We can adhere to the law if we are sensitised on what is required," he said.

Similarly, Mr Taban Magidu, who operates a *kizindalo* in Bwendero in Bujjumba Sub-county, said operators are willing to comply with regulations if properly guided. He added that megaphone operations provide livelihoods to owners, technicians, and announcers.

Daily Monitor has established some *bizindalo* operators, partly in Kalangala Town Council, as taxes as part of efforts by authorities to regulate their activities.

Ms Barbra Nabunya, the town clerk, said the council has issued a regulation and operational guidelines as restricting operating hours, controlling noise levels, to manage terms.

"Those whom residents complain about or fail to adhere to set terms are stopped from operating," she said.

During the meeting, Kalangala District Commissioner Fred Badda, called on the community to first sensitise leaders and residents in Kalangala about the legal requirements before taking punitive action. He noted that the *bizindalo* are sometimes used during emergencies, including pirate attacks on fishermen, landing site communities and first responders.

Badda also emphasised the need to improve telecommunications structure in the district.

"What we need is improved network coverage for community radios and mobile telephones so that information can easily reach the population," he added.

Sources indicate that UCC during the meeting said that although the commission remains concerned by limited resources to enforce the law, the decision to lift restrictions on the megaphone radios rests with UCC not the RDC.

In February 2017, the UCC regulated the broadcasting industry by banning *bizindalo*, accusing the operators of contravening the law and causing noise pollution. However, they have remained operating in various parts of the country.