



## A Brief Guide to Kenya

### Welcome to Kenya:

Kenya is a country of exquisite beauty. Considered by many to be the cradle of humanity, Kenya is rich in culture and diversity, home to 42 different tribes, each having its own language and cultural heritage. The largest tribes are the Kikuyu, Luo, and Kalenjin.

Kenya features one of the most diverse collections of wildlife in the world. View animals in their natural habitats in a multitude of game parks and reserves, including the big five: Elephant, Rhino, Leopard, Lion, and Buffalo. Enjoy stunning tropical beaches, and Kenya is a paradise for bird-watching

Regional center for mission and international development. The United Nations holds one of its world headquarters in Nairobi and . . .

Kenya is the cradle of humanity

### A bit about Nairobi:

Nairobi is often considered the gateway to East Africa. It is the largest city in the region with a population approaching four million residents. A vibrant, diverse, and bustling city it is the headquarters for many large businesses and non-governmental organizations operating throughout the region. It is home to several tourist attractions, including the Nairobi National Park, the only wildlife game reserve next to a major city.



### Fun Facts

44 million people



42 tribes

a world leading producer of:



Mother Tongue



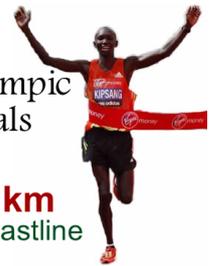
Mount Kenya is Africa's second highest peak



Pioneer in mobile banking



86 Olympic Medals



over 500 km of tropical coastline



1132 species of birds

Kenyans have been rated as the world's **most optimistic** people

Nairobi was first established as a small railway depot in the 1890's on the place of "cold waters." The depot quickly developed into an administrative centre and became the capital of the British Protectorate in 1901. Since independence in 1963, the city has experienced tremendous growth with many Kenyans migrating to the urban centre in search of employment and opportunity. The city includes many beautiful landscapes and gardens in the upmarket estates as well as nearly 70 different slums. Kibera, one of the largest slums in Africa is just one of many informal settlements within the city.

### **Understanding Kenyan Culture:**

Kenyans are known for their warm hospitality and welcome. Greetings play an important role and handshaking is used at each meeting and in greeting each person when entering a home. Clapping your right elbow with the left hand during greeting is a sign of respect, particularly to the elderly. According to Kenyan culture, visitors are considered a blessing from God and it is a custom to always prepare food for visitors, offering the best hospitality possible. Westerners spending time in impoverished rural areas or in the informal settlements are impressed to find Kenyan families sacrificing as much as they can to make their guests feel welcome. It is customary for visitors to bring basic foodstuffs as a gift when visiting a home, such as flour, cooking oil, and sugar.

Kenyans are a hopeful and cheerful people, generally considered to be very optimistic about their lives and the future. Churches, mosques, and temples are common throughout the country and spirituality plays a vital role in daily life. Visitors from the West or from largely secular societies are often surprised by the worship-filled lifestyles and spiritual worldview of Kenyans. Traditional African Religion has a deep influence on Kenyan culture along with Western Christianity. Islam has a long history along the coast of Kenya and in recent years, the influence of Islam has been growing through conversion and migration from Somalia and other Islamic countries.

Popular sports in Kenya include soccer, volleyball, and cricket. Kenya has been highly competitive in rugby, volleyball and cricket at the international level and is best known for its world record marathon runners. Western hip hop, gospel, and rhythm and blues music are very popular throughout Kenya and are commonly played in public service vehicles. Jamaican and local reggae are also very popular. Local gospel and hip-hop music are burgeoning industries and there is also a strong Congolese influence in the Kenyan music industry.

### **Climate and Clothing:**

Nairobi is blessed with a mild, altitude adjusted tropical climate. Temperatures typically range between 60 to 80 degrees Fahrenheit. The weather is usually very pleasant, but can be cool at night, especially during the winter months of June and July when temperatures can dip into the upper 40's Fahrenheit. Because of its altitude and proximity to the equator, the sun can be quite strong and skin burns easily. Visitors are encouraged to apply plenty of sunscreen when spending time outdoors. The climate varies in other parts of Kenya, with some areas being arid or semi-arid. Despite the high temperatures, locals do not normally wear shorts (they are usually only worn by children and athletes or in rural areas when farming). Kenyans are known for being well groomed and smartly dressed. The general dress code in urban areas can be described as business casual (typically trousers and short or long-sleeve dress shirts for men and dresses or long skirts/trousers with modest tops for females). Traditional attire is common throughout Kenya and especially in the more rural areas. For conferences and church services, conservative and more formal attire is recommended, and for services clergy may be asked to robe.

## **TRAVEL TIPS:**

Below is a series of tips and suggestions to help you prepare for your visit, stay healthy and safe during your time in Kenya, and enjoy your trip to the fullest.

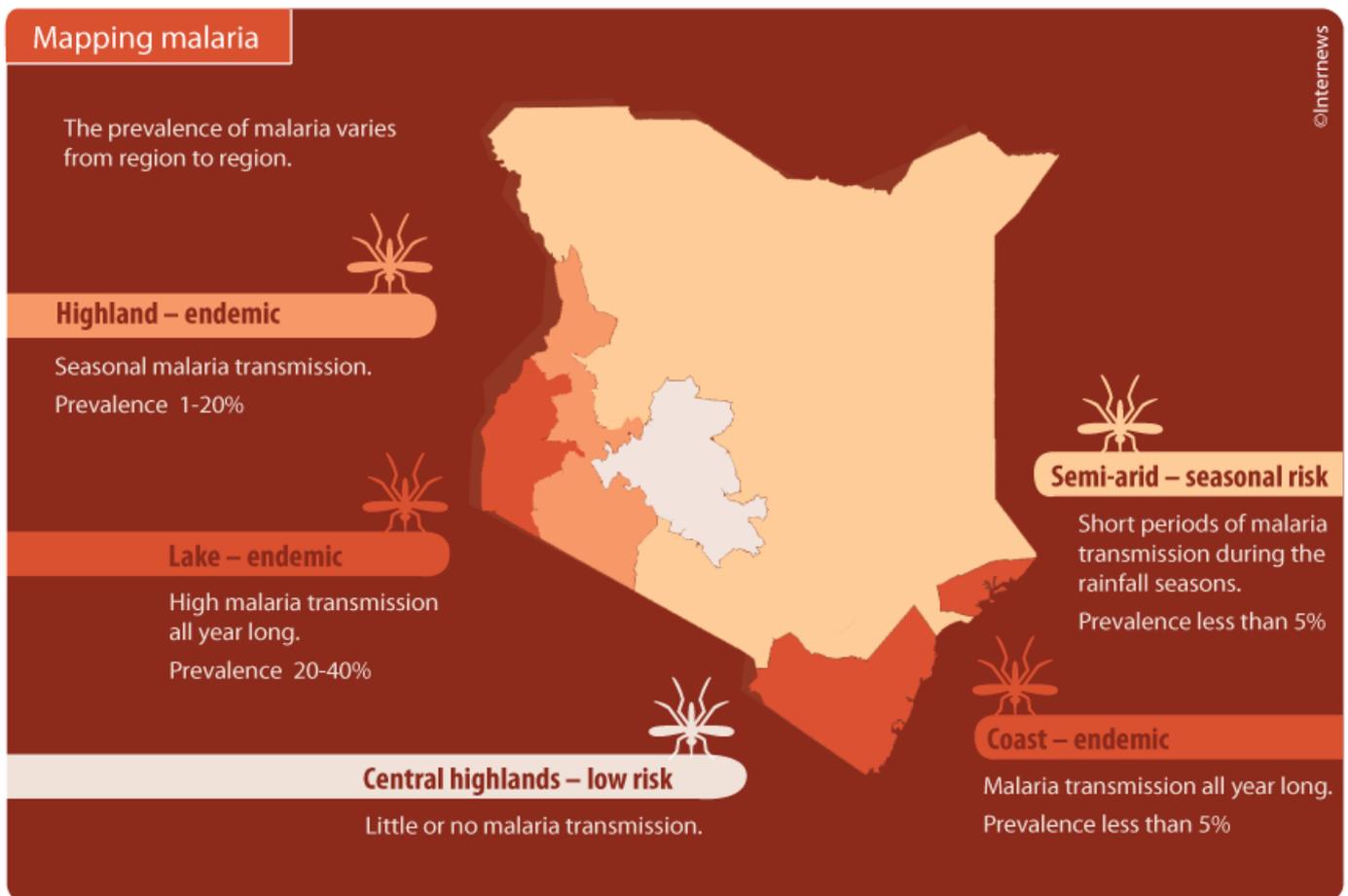
### **Health:**

The Center for Disease Control recommends that individuals receive each of the following vaccines before traveling to Kenya (note that *the rabies vaccine is optional but not recommended*):

<b>Vaccination or Disease</b>	<b>Recommendations or Requirements for Vaccine-Preventable Diseases</b>
<a href="#">Routine</a>	Recommended if you are not up-to-date with routine shots such as, measles/mumps/rubella (MMR) vaccine, diphtheria / pertussis / tetanus (DPT) vaccine, poliovirus vaccine, etc.
<a href="#">Yellow Fever</a>	CDC yellow fever vaccination recommendation for travelers to Kenya: For all travelers >9 months of age. The cities of Nairobi and Mombasa have lower risk of transmission than rural areas. Kenya requires travelers arriving from <a href="#">countries where yellow fever is present</a> to present proof of yellow fever vaccination. Vaccination should be given 10 days before travel and at 10 year intervals if there is on-going risk.
<a href="#">Hepatitis A</a> or immune globulin (IG)	Recommended for all unvaccinated people traveling to or working in countries with an intermediate or high level of hepatitis A virus infection ( <a href="#">see map</a> ) where exposure might occur through food or water. Cases of travel-related hepatitis A can also occur in travelers to developing countries with "standard" tourist itineraries, accommodations, and food consumption behaviors.
<a href="#">Hepatitis B</a>	Recommended for all unvaccinated persons traveling to or working in countries with intermediate to high levels of endemic HBV transmission ( <a href="#">see map</a> ), especially those who might be exposed to blood or body fluids, have sexual contact with the local population, or be exposed through medical treatment (e.g., for an accident).
<a href="#">Typhoid</a>	Recommended for all unvaccinated people traveling to or working in East Africa, especially if visiting smaller cities, villages, or rural areas and staying with friends or relatives where exposure might occur through food or water. ( <i>I recommend the oral vaccine instead of the injection, it lasts longer and is less painful:</i> ).
<a href="#">Meningococcal (meningitis)</a>	Recommended if you plan to visit countries that experience epidemics of meningococcal disease during December through June ( <a href="#">see map</a> ).
<a href="#">Rabies</a>	Recommended for travelers spending a lot of time outdoors, especially in rural areas. . .Also recommended for travelers with significant occupational risks (such as veterinarians). . .
<a href="#">Polio</a>	Recommended for adult travelers who have received a primary series with either inactivated poliovirus vaccine (IPV) or oral polio vaccine (OPV). They should receive another dose of IPV before departure. For adults, available data do not

Vaccination or Disease	Recommendations or Requirements for Vaccine-Preventable Diseases
	indicate the need for more than a single lifetime booster dose with IPV.

**Malaria:** Malaria is one of the leading causes of death in the world and affects an estimated 200 million people each year. Malaria is caused by *Plasmodium* parasites that are spread to humans through the bites of infected *Anopheles* mosquitos. The disease produces high fevers, vomiting, diarrhea, headaches, sweating, and chills. Pregnant women and young children are particularly at risk of malaria. Across Africa, nearly half a million children under the age of five die of malaria every year. In some parts of Kenya, Malaria is endemic and a major cause of infant and child mortality, and it affects up to forty percent of the population. In other parts of Kenya, malaria transmission is seasonal or even non-existent. For example, Nairobi and the Central Highlands have a high altitude and while there are mosquitos, the cool temperatures in these areas during the rainy season prevent development of the parasite and transmission. See the malaria map below to see which parts of Kenya are most affected by malaria:



For short term visitors (less than one month), use of anti-malarial oral prophylactics is usually encouraged when visiting Kenya as a preventative measure. In recent times, however, the World Health Organization has revised its recommendations as prophylactics may inhibit early detection and treatment of malaria. Check with your doctor for guidance on malaria prevention based on where you will be visiting. A variety of anti-malarial prophylactics are available and you can discuss options with your doctor. For longer stays in Kenya (more than one month), many Westerners only use an anti-malarial when traveling to a high

incidence zone such as the coast or Western Kenya or during the rainy seasons. The best protection remains a good mosquito net (widely available) combined with a good insect repellent and covering exposed skin especially during peak hours of transmission (night time and early morning). Early diagnosis and prompt treatment of malaria are very important. If you experience symptoms after spending time in a malaria zone, visit a doctor right away. Kenya is one of the world leaders in malaria treatment and clinics and hospitals across the country are all equipped to test for and to treat malaria.

For more information or to find a travel clinic near you, please visit:

<http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel/destinationKenya.aspx>

## **Water and Electricity:**

In larger cities and towns across Kenya, as well as in all hotels and tourist attractions, water and electricity are readily available. In more rural areas, villages may rely on wells, dams, or rain water and have varying degrees of access to electricity. Solar power is becoming more common across the country. Local power is supplied at 220-240 volts AC and utilizes standard British plugs. Visitors from America will be able to charge their phones or laptops with simple UK type adaptors. Other appliances may need a step-down transformer to convert to 110-120 volts AC. Surge protectors are strongly recommended. Adaptors and surge protectors can be purchased locally at most grocery stores at very reasonable rates.

Power outages are not uncommon and may occur briefly each day or week. Many businesses employ backup generators so loss of power is not even noticed. Water shortages are common throughout much of the country. Most homes experience water rationing at least three to five days per week. That said, visitors and residents should be keen on storage, usage, and conservation of water.

The local tap water in most cities is supposedly clean, but may contain a variety of bacteria and parasites. While in Kenya, drink only bottled water or water that has been properly filtered or boiled (Nairobi is at a higher elevation so you should boil at least ten to twenty minutes to be safe). There are plenty of varieties of clean, bottled water available locally (and also a few fakes – stick to the major brands).

## **Food:**

Kenya has a wide variety of traditional dishes and Kenyan food has very few preservatives as most produce is fresh from the field to the market. Locally grown fruits include numerous varieties of mangoes, pineapples, papayas, passion fruit, tree tomato, bananas, avocados, and more. Enjoy delicious fruit, just be sure to wash well, peel the skin carefully, and/or use a clean knife when eating raw fruits. Salads or uncooked vegetables should be avoided except in places where you know they have been properly prepared. Missionaries or long-term cross-cultural residents, normally treat raw vegetables or fruits with bleach or potassium permanganate (or just wash and dry very well). Otherwise all cooked foods should be safe. . . Kenyans prepare meals with a lot of starch. Cooked vegetables, eggs, stews, and rice are common and meats include goat, beef, chicken, and fish such as Tilapia. A host of excellent local dishes are available and here's a sampling of some of the most common ones:



**Ugali:** A staple of Kenya. Maize flour cooked with water, this is a heavy starch that can best be compared to a very thick version of Southern grits. It is unflavored, but is molded and eaten with the hand and dipped in other dishes.

**Githeri:** A traditional Kikuyu dish. This is beans cooked with maize, onions, potatoes, tomatoes and spices. A filling and energizing meal.



**Chai:** Most Kenyans take tea three to four times a day (with breakfast, tea breaks around 10 a.m. and 4 p.m., and sometimes after the evening meal). Kenyan Chai is prepared with milk, water, and locally grown tea. Delicious!

**Sukumawiki:** A local variety of kales cooked with onions, tomatoes, and spices. Very nutritious. Literally it means “to push the week” or what one will eat at the end of the week if money is running low. Along with Ugali, this is one of the most affordable and main meals of Kenyans.



**Chapati:** A thick and filling tortilla that makes a great accompaniment to tea or to a stew.

**Mandazi:** A local fried doughnut. Normally served with Chai.

**Pilau:** A traditional Swahili dish of rice, perfected in the Coastal Region. Many varieties exist, but commonly includes vegetables, meat, and spices.

**Nyama Choma:** Kenyan barbeque, roast meat eaten on the bone. Often taken at large family gatherings or celebrations

## Tourist Attractions

Below is a list of the major tourist attractions and game parks in Kenya. For more information on game parks or reserves, visit the website of Kenya Wildlife Services at [www.kws.org](http://www.kws.org). For general information on tourism see the official travel and tourism guide of the Kenya Tourist Board, [www.magicalkenya.com](http://www.magicalkenya.com). For good quotes and packages on safaris and more, see one of the leading travel and tour operators: [www.uniglobeletsgotravel.com](http://www.uniglobeletsgotravel.com).

## Alcohol and Drugs

The drinking age in Kenya is 18 and Kenya Breweries produces the world famous Tusker Beer along with a variety of alcoholic and non-alcoholic drinks. There are many options for nightlife in Nairobi and Mombasa but missions teams and missionary visitors are strongly advised against smoking or using alcohol during their time in Kenya. While widely practiced, these are social and religious taboos and are viewed differently in Africa than in the Western world. This is especially true among indigenous Christian and Muslim groups. What may be normally tolerated or accepted by the Western Church can be a stumbling block for missions and can leave a damaging impact and legacy on missions organizations and efforts. In Kenya, common drugs of abuse include marijuana, tobacco, miraa (a chewed stimulant), and alcohol (both brewed formally and informally).

## Visas:

A tourist visa is necessary to enter Kenya. This is a simple stamp in your passport that can be provided either through a Kenyan Embassy in your home country or when you arrive at the airport in Nairobi. The tourist visa is valid for a period of three months and can be renewed once. For convenience, I recommend purchasing a visa at the JKIA Airport when you arrive in Nairobi. After getting off your plane as you go through customs, just get in the Visa Counter line. You will need to give them your passport, a landing card that you can fill in on the plane or pick up when you arrive, and pay the Visa Fee. At last check the Visa Fee was \$50 USD payable in Euros, Sterling Pounds, or U.S. Dollars (oddly enough they don't accept Kenyan currency). In rare instances they may ask you to show them a copy of your return ticket and an address where you will be staying in Kenya before you are approved.

## Money and Banking:

The local currency is Kenya shillings (KES). The exchange rate fluctuates but at the moment, \$1 USD is equivalent to approximately 84 KES. A Currency Exchange Booth is available next to the baggage claim inside the airport and in many places throughout Nairobi. Normally, I advise visitors to carry a small amount of cash, and instead of exchanging money, to use local ATMs as needed for their primary method of banking. You can withdraw money using any VISA (some take Mastercard as well but not as common) compatible ATM card at most banks throughout Kenya. This provides the best exchange rate and prevents you from having to worry about carrying large amounts of cash. Just notify your bank before you leave that you will be traveling to Kenya. Otherwise, they might become suspicious about any overseas transactions.

Westerners traveling in Kenya are perceived to be loaded with an abundance of cash and are considered prime targets for theft or solicitation. During ministry visits you may be asked on multiple occasions to give a personal donation, fund a project, or to sponsor a student. The response should always be a polite "no", instead referring the request to a team or local leader. Under no circumstances should a team member give out funds or promise financial or material support. The only exception is in offering or tithe while visiting a local church. By following this simple guideline, team members will avoid a wide range of potential problems (jealousy, crime, dependency, misuse, lack of accountability, etc). To summarize, any opportunities for giving or support need to be coordinated with the leadership through the proper structures and with appropriate accountability.

Nairobi is known for having one of the largest rich-poor divides in the world. In effect there are two parallel economies that operate in the city. The average resident of Nairobi earns less than \$2 per day, with 60% residing in informal settlements. Yet there is a significant upperclass that may earn 100 times as much. Visitors and missionaries

from Western cultures are generally assumed to fit in the latter category. Visitors are advised to be discreet with money and carry small amounts and units of local currency. Corruption is a major challenge in Kenya. Bribes may be expected by government personnel, traffic police, or other officials. Request official receipts for any government fine/transaction. It is never necessary to pay a bribe and eventually patience will accomplish a better result.

## **Safety/Security:**

Nairobi is a large, bustling city with one of the world's most economically diverse populations. There is a great deal of affluence, however the majority of the population lives in informal settlements or slums. Petty theft is common and Westerners are often considered prime targets. The city has been aptly nicknamed "Nairobbery." The U.S. State Department urges Americans to register with the embassy (<https://travelregistration.state.gov>) and to be vigilant and aware of their surroundings. The State Department regularly issues Travel Warnings to Kenya based on terrorist threats and the relatively high levels of violent crime, including carjackings and burglaries. Here is some of their advice:

*"Violent and sometimes fatal criminal attacks, including armed carjackings, grenade attacks, home invasions and burglaries, and kidnappings can occur at any time and in any location, particularly in Nairobi. U.S. citizens, including U.S. Embassy employees, have been victims of such crimes within the past year. U.S. citizens in Kenya should be extremely vigilant with regard to their personal security, particularly in crowded public places such as clubs, hotels, resorts, shopping centers, restaurants, bus stations, and places of worship. U.S. citizens should also remain alert in residential areas, at schools, and at outdoor recreational events. U.S. citizens should use commonsense precautions at all times, to include the following practices: avoid crowded transportation venues; visit only legitimate businesses and tourist areas only during daylight hours; use well-marked taxis and be sure to lock vehicle doors and keep windows up; lock all lodging doors and windows; carry minimal amounts of cash and credit cards; do not wear jewelry which attracts undue attention; know emergency phone numbers; do not resist or antagonize armed criminals; and always be aware of your surroundings. These measures can help ensure your travel to Kenya is safe and enjoyable."*

Despite the concerns listed above, thousands of tourists, business travelers, and missionaries visit Kenya each year. Here are a few additional tips to help you remain safe, secure, and healthy while traveling in Kenya.

- Avoid public demonstrations
- Don't eat food prepared by street vendors
- Be aware of your surroundings
- Wash your hands often with soap and water
- Do not take unpasteurized dairy products
- Wear your seatbelt
- Dress modestly: leave your gold watch at home
- Don't walk outside or use public transportation at night (especially in Nairobi).
- Be careful with public transportation
- Obey local laws (some of which may be different than what you're used to)

## **Local Transportation:**

The main forms of ground transportation within Kenya involve buses, matatus (passenger vans), boda bodas (bicycle or motorcycle taxis), and walking on foot. The buses and matatus are generally very efficient and affordable, but take some getting used to and require special precautions. Often decorated in bright colors and blaring loud music, these vehicles are operated by a driver and team of conductors who recruit passengers, collect the fare (and occasionally rob passengers). The general rule is: "kupanda ni popote, lakini kushuka ni stage." In other words, you can board a bus or matatu almost anywhere that you can flag one down, but you have to alight at one of the designated bus stops. Each vehicle has an assigned route which is indicated by a number on the front or side of the vehicle. Knowing the routes and the names of the stages, takes time to learn and often changes. Likewise, the fares

are subject to change depending on traffic and weather conditions and may depend on the distance one is traveling. On several of the buses, there are set fees and tickets are issued to paying passengers. On matatus, however, the charges are up to the discretion of the conductor. Riding on local buses or matatus can be very safe and efficient, but requires discretion and vigilance. Avoid public transportation after dark. Walking long distances is a way of life in Kenya. In the rural areas, children may walk or run up to ten miles in the morning to attend school. In the cities, the nearest bus stop may be a healthy walk from one's destination, so it is important to have a comfortable pair of walking shoes.

Regular taxi services are available in Kenya from a variety of companies and private operators. Passengers can hire sedans, vans, or four wheel drive vehicles with or without a driver. Self-drive is possible with a Kenyan or International Driver's License, available from the American Automobile Association, but is only recommended for long-term residents who have become familiar with Nairobi roads (it's a very different system than most Western countries). Most guest houses and hotels have their own arrangements for local transportation. There are no published rates, and prices can vary widely so be sure to agree on a price before setting out. Also, streets and addresses are often unmarked, so make sure your driver knows the destination.

### **Communicating by Phone and Email:**

Phone and internet services are generally good and available throughout most of Kenya. Mobile phones use the SIM card system and phones can be purchased locally for as little as \$20 USD and registered at customer service centers using a passport. The SIM cards are not compatible with most U.S. phones unless they are designed for international use. Kenyan phones are compatible with UK sim cards. Any of the major service providers are good (SafariCom, Airtel, or Orange) and SIM cards can be purchased and activated from retailers across the city. Airtime is added through purchasing scratch cards and allows for easy local as well as international calls. Calls to the U.S. and Canada run as little as 3 KES per minute with excellent clarity. USB modems which utilize the SIM card system are also very affordable and provide easy internet access locally. Many hotels, guesthouses, and coffee houses offer free Wi-Fi and internet cafes are abundant in towns and cities. Kenya is an innovator in mobile phone technology and is known for developing a system to send money by phone. The M-PESA system can be used for various local business transactions.