

Hustling Day in Silicon Savannah

DAWN IN THIKA, A TOWN AN
HOUR'S DRIVE NORTH OF
NAIROBI CITY, KENTA...

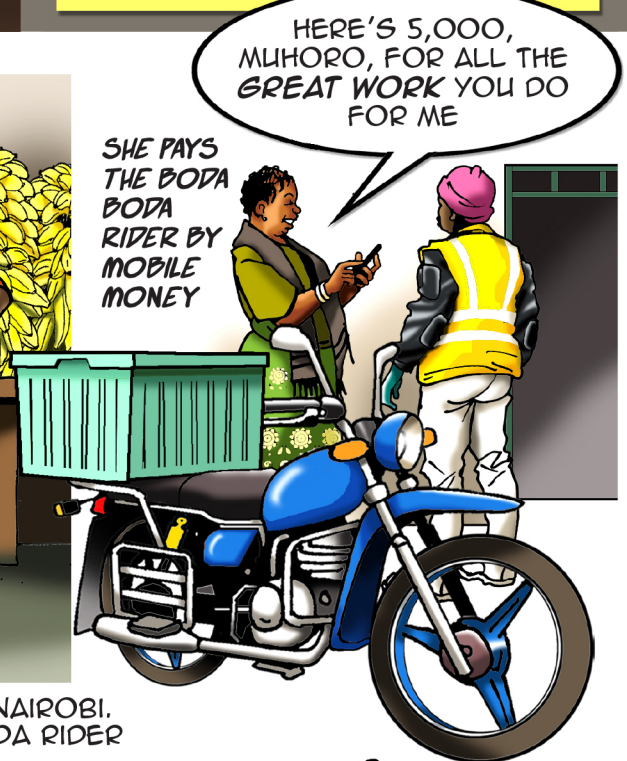


MAMA BIASHARA AND HER NIECE, WAGECI,
ARE ALREADY HARD AT WORK...

MAMA BIASHARA SELLS FRUITS AND
VEGETABLES TO MARKET SELLER
WOMEN (CALLED MAMA MBOGAS*) IN
NAIROBI AND THIKA. *mboga means
vegetables in Kiswahili.

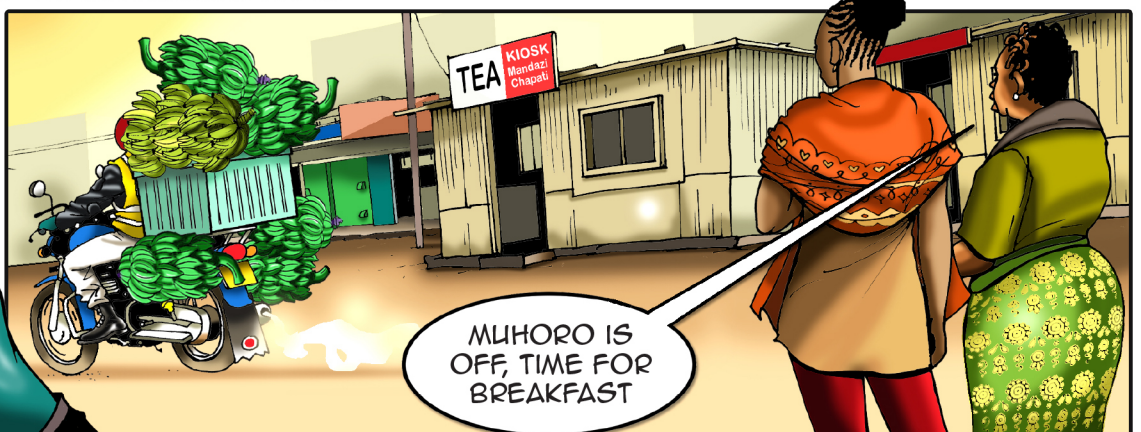
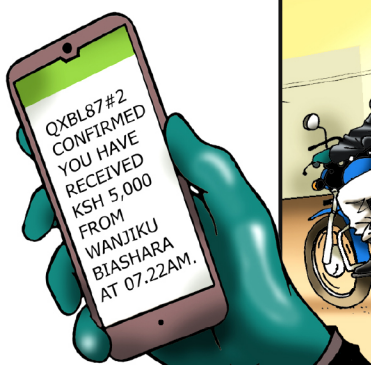


THESE ARE ALL OF THE ORDERS FOR NAIROBI.
NOW IS TIME TO GET THEM TO THE BODA RIDER
AND WE CAN CALL IT A DAY

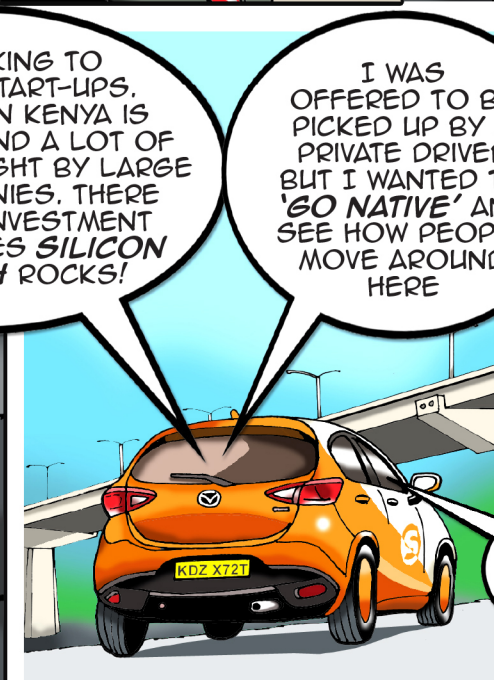
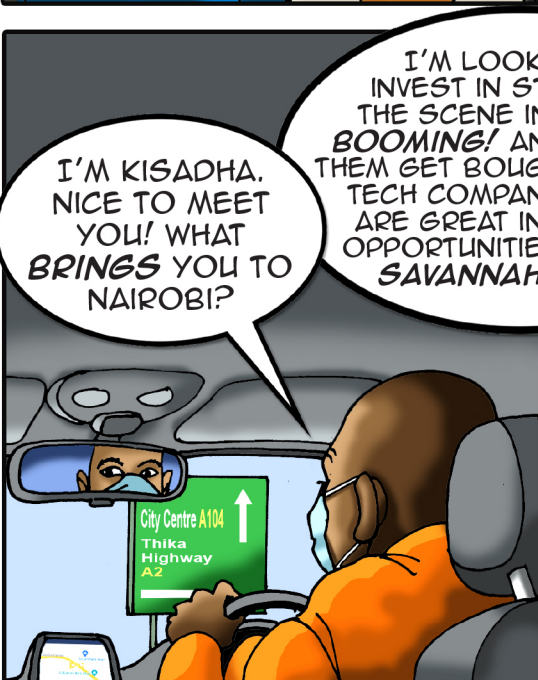
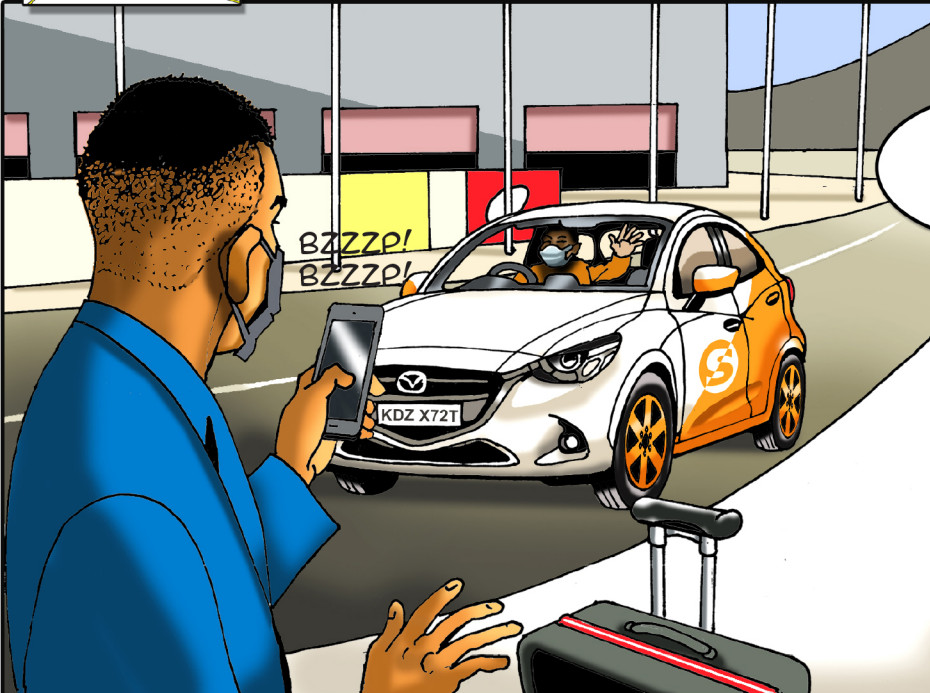
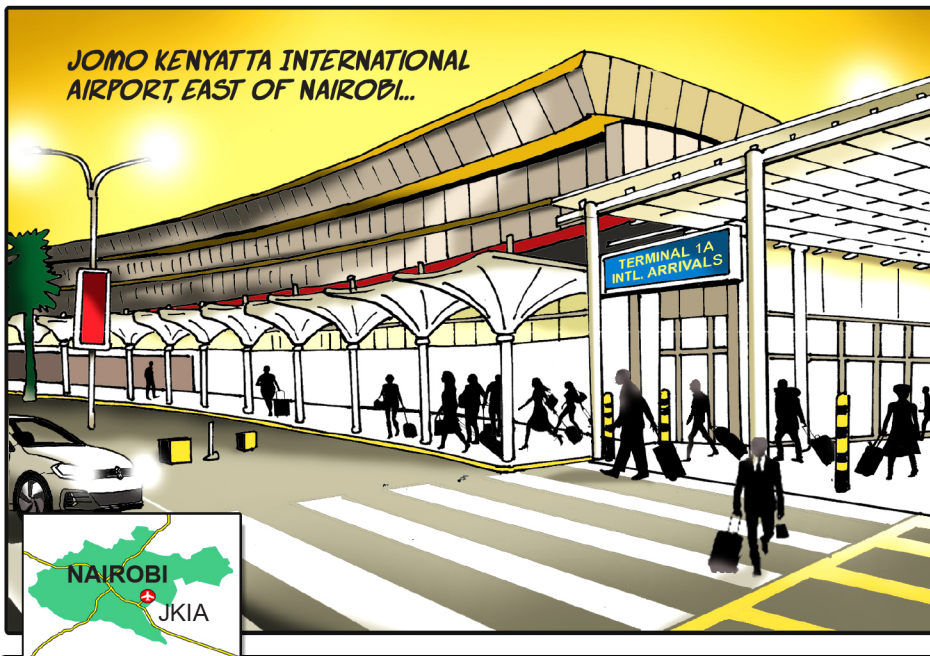


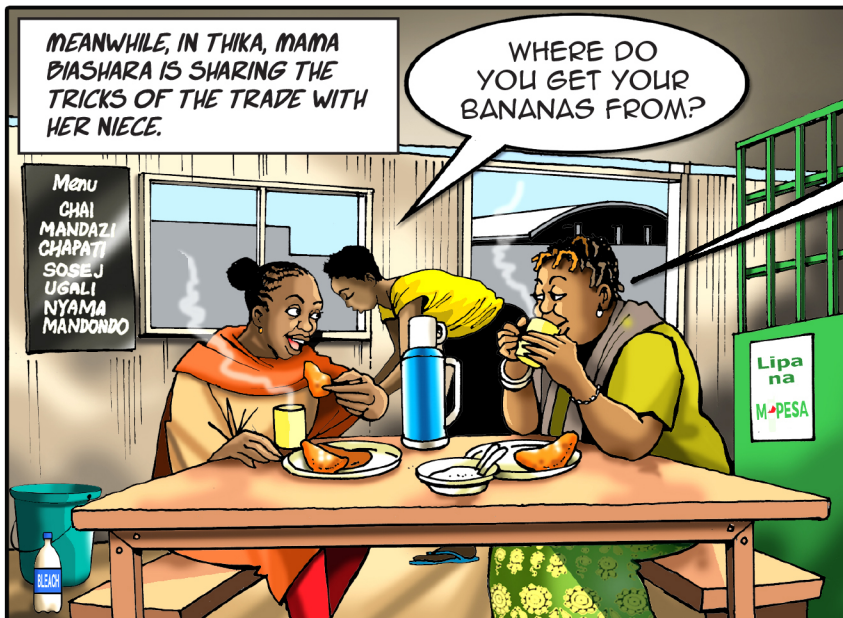
SHE PAYS
THE BODA
RIDER BY
MOBILE
MONEY

HERE'S 5,000,
MUHORO, FOR ALL THE
GREAT WORK YOU DO
FOR ME



MUHORO IS
OFF, TIME FOR
BREAKFAST



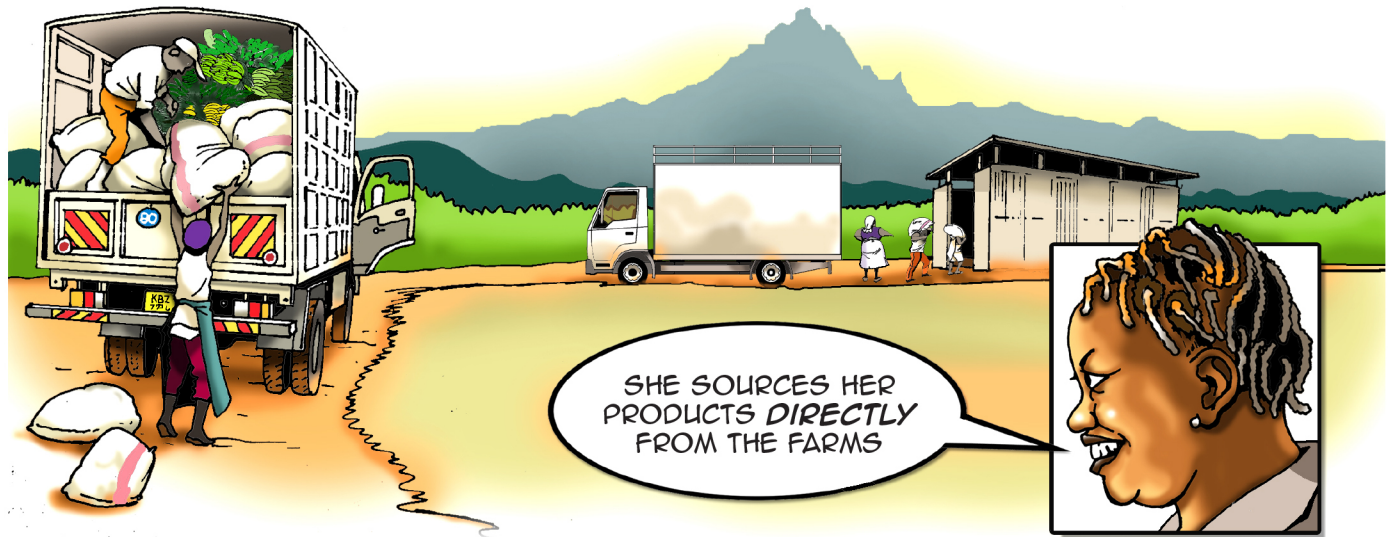


MEANWHILE, IN THIKA, MAMA BIASHARA IS SHARING THE TRICKS OF THE TRADE WITH HER NIECE.

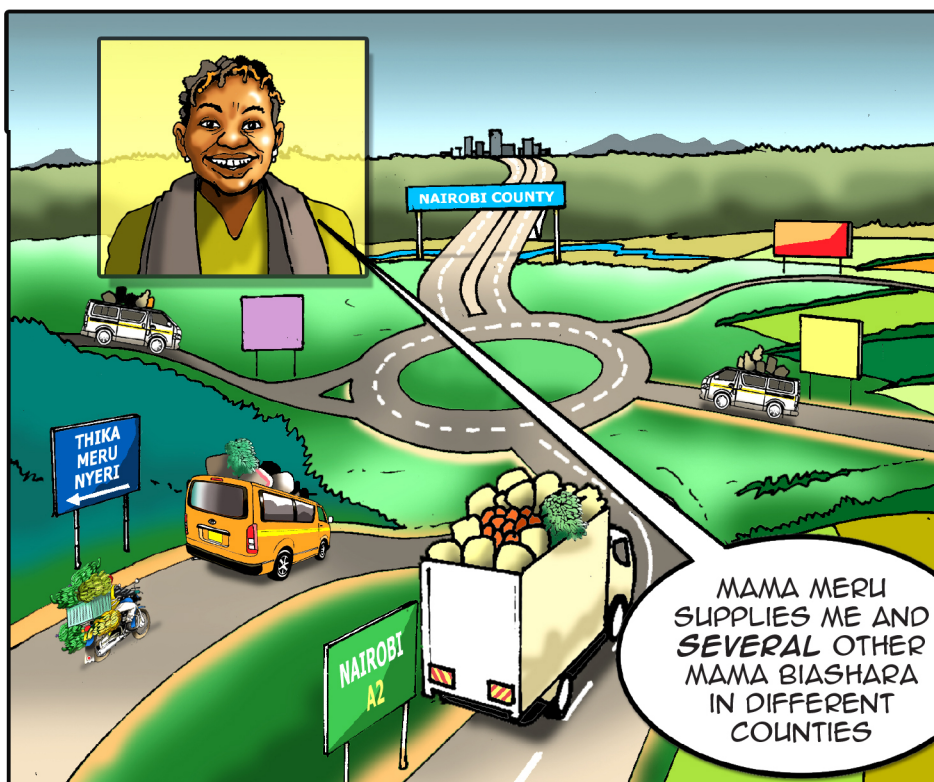
WHERE DO YOU GET YOUR BANANAS FROM?

I GET ALL MY PRODUCTS FROM MAMA MERU FROM MERU COUNTY. I PLACE NEW ORDERS WITH HER TWICE A WEEK

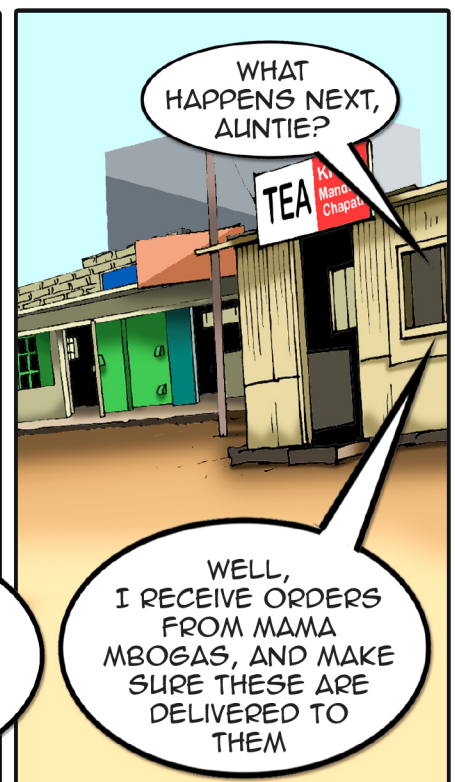
MAMA MERU...



SHE SOURCES HER PRODUCTS *DIRECTLY* FROM THE FARMS



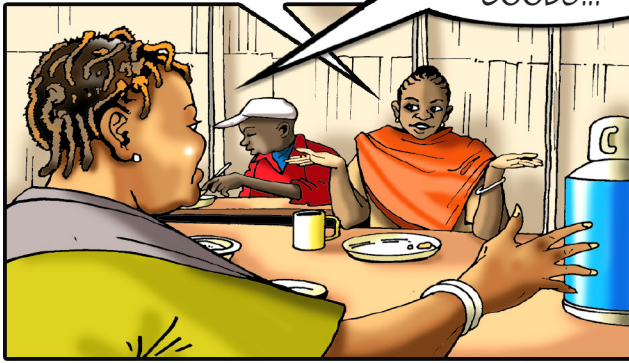
MAMA MERU SUPPLIES ME AND **SEVERAL** OTHER MAMA BIASHARA IN DIFFERENT COUNTIES



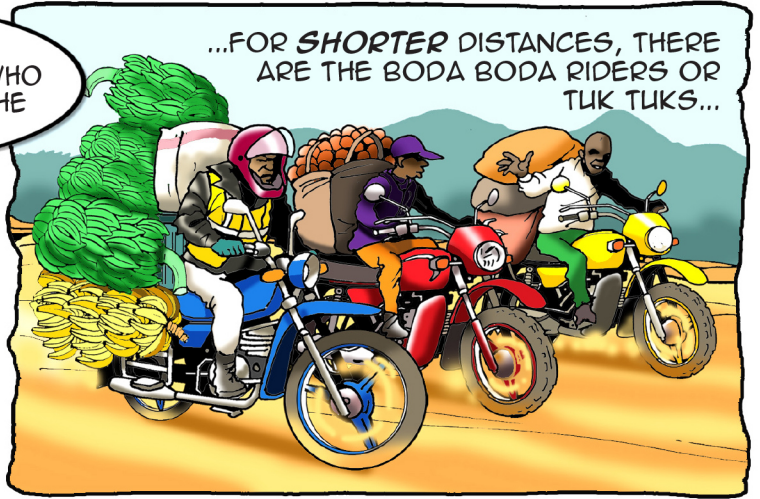
WELL, I RECEIVE ORDERS FROM MAMA MBOGAS, AND MAKE SURE THESE ARE DELIVERED TO THEM

BUT **HOW** ARE ALL THESE ORDERS DELIVERED IN TIME, AND TO THE **RIGHT** PEOPLE?

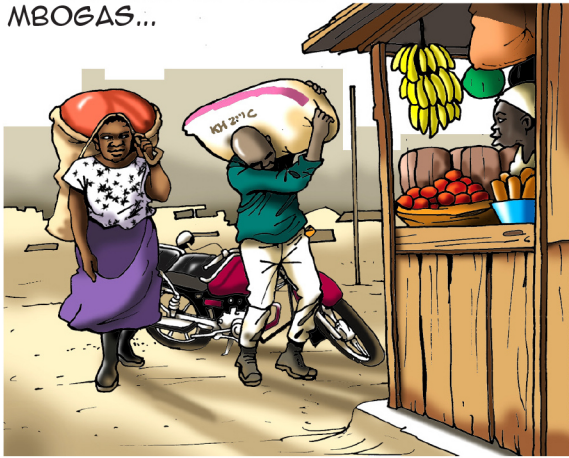
WE HAVE A **NET-
WORK** OF PEOPLE WHO HELP US DELIVER THE GOODS...



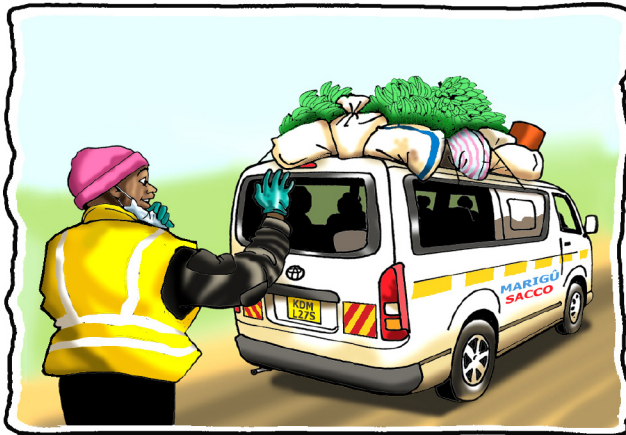
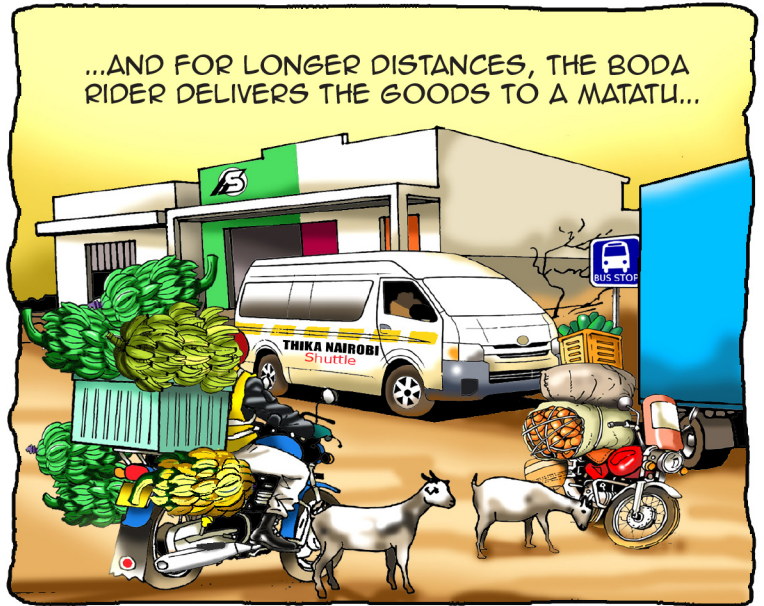
...FOR **SHORTER** DISTANCES, THERE ARE THE BODA BODA RIDERS OR TUK TUKS...



...THEY DELIVER THE GOODS TO THE KIOSKS RUN BY MAMA MBOGAS...



...AND FOR LONGER DISTANCES, THE BODA RIDER DELIVERS THE GOODS TO A MATATU...



ANOTHER BODA BODA OPERATOR THEN PICKS IT UP AGAIN...

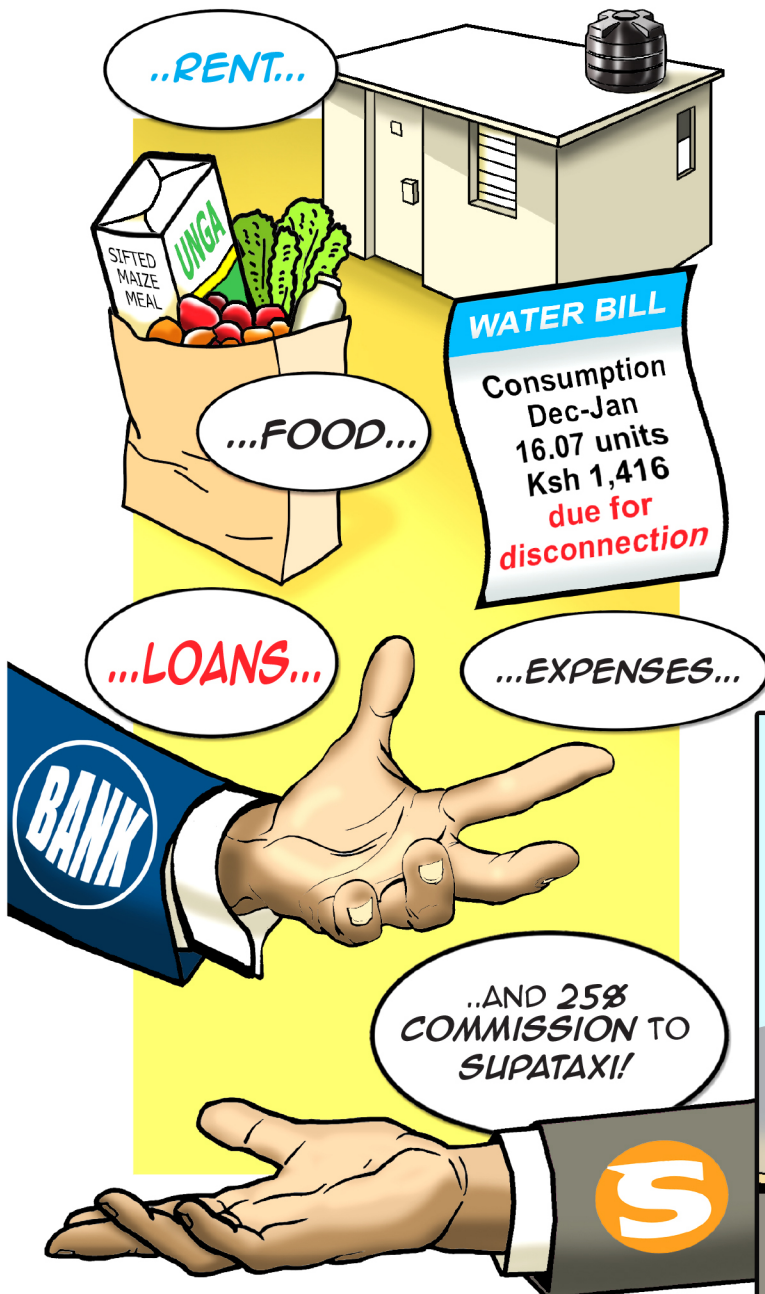
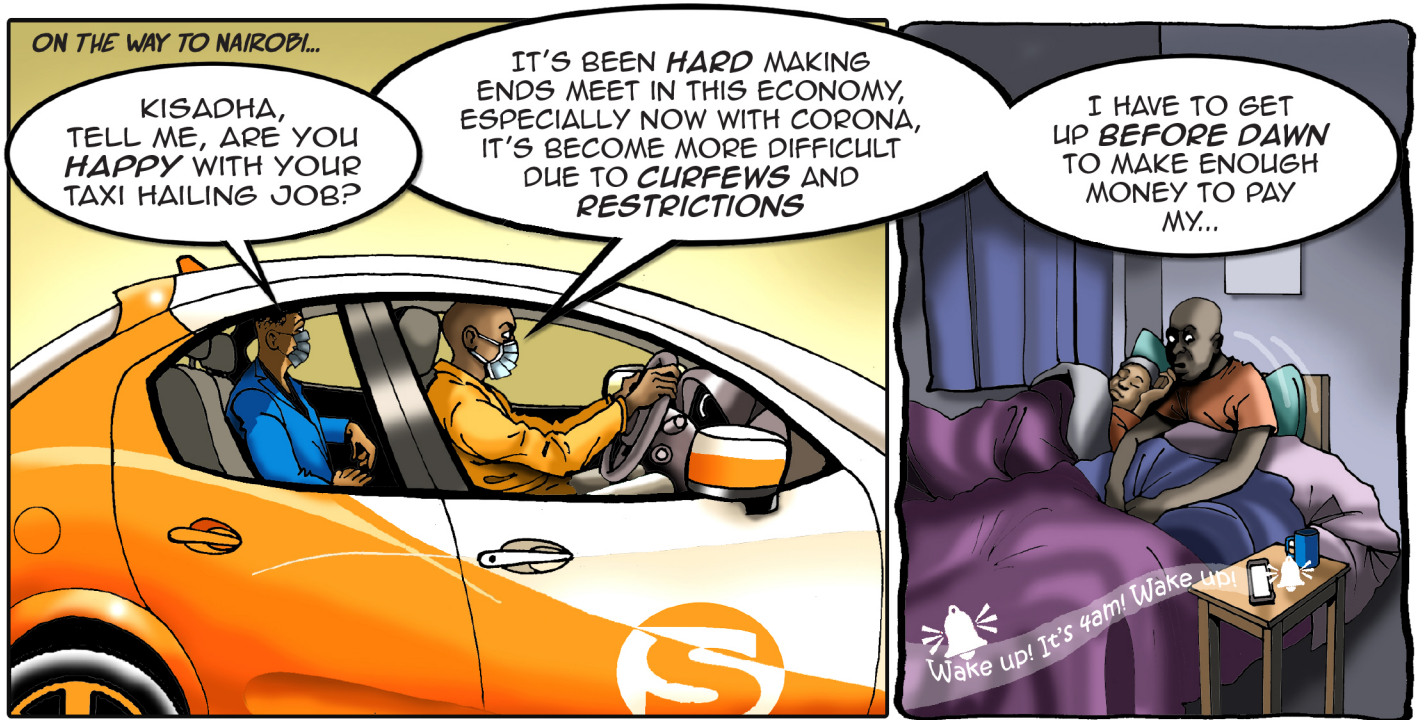


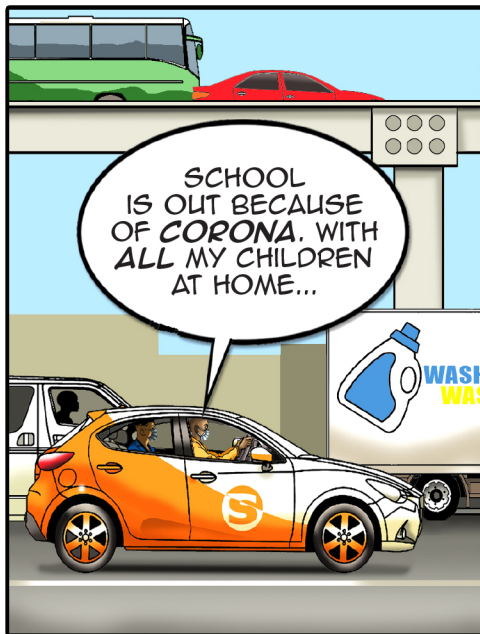
...AND DELIVERS IT TO THE CLIENT!



COME NOW, WE HAVE **MORE** WORK TO DO!







...I HAVE MORE MOUTHS TO FEED!



WELL, AT LEAST YOU ARE YOUR OWN BOSS, RIGHT? YOU'RE FREE TO *DECIDE* HOW AND WHEN YOU WANT TO WORK...

I'M NOT FREE. MY CONTRACT WITH SUPATAXI SAYS THAT I'M A CONTRACTOR. I'M A BUSINESSMAN! BUT, IN REALITY, I WORK FOR MY CREDITORS. SUPA REQUIRES ME TO HAVE A CAR NO OLDER THAN 3 YEARS, SO I HAD TO TAKE OUT A LOAN TO BUY A NEW ONE. MEANWHILE, THEY PAY LESS AND LESS, IN ORDER TO COMPETE WITH OTHER COMPANIES

SINCE 2017 WE HAVE GONE ON STRIKE SEVERAL TIMES FOR BETTER WORKING CONDITIONS.

EACH TIME WE CONVERGED AT THE MAIN INTERSECTIONS IN DOWNTOWN NAIROBI, WE GROUND THE RUSH-HOUR TRAFFIC TO A HALT!

THEY ONLY NOTICE US WHEN WE BECOME INVISIBLE!

LET'S GO KARURA!!

MANY OF US UNINSTALLED THE SUPATAXI APP

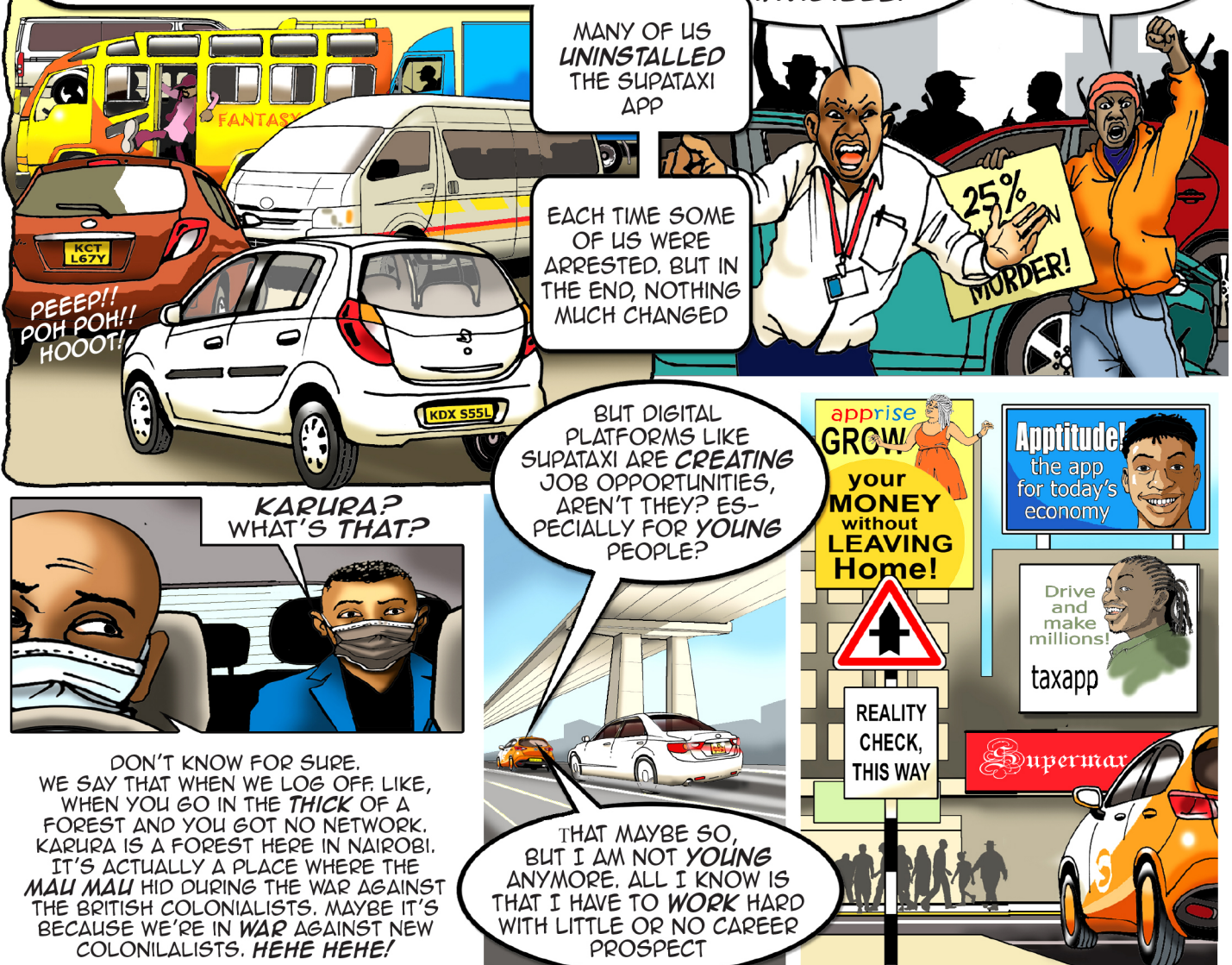
EACH TIME SOME OF US WERE ARRESTED. BUT IN THE END, NOTHING MUCH CHANGED

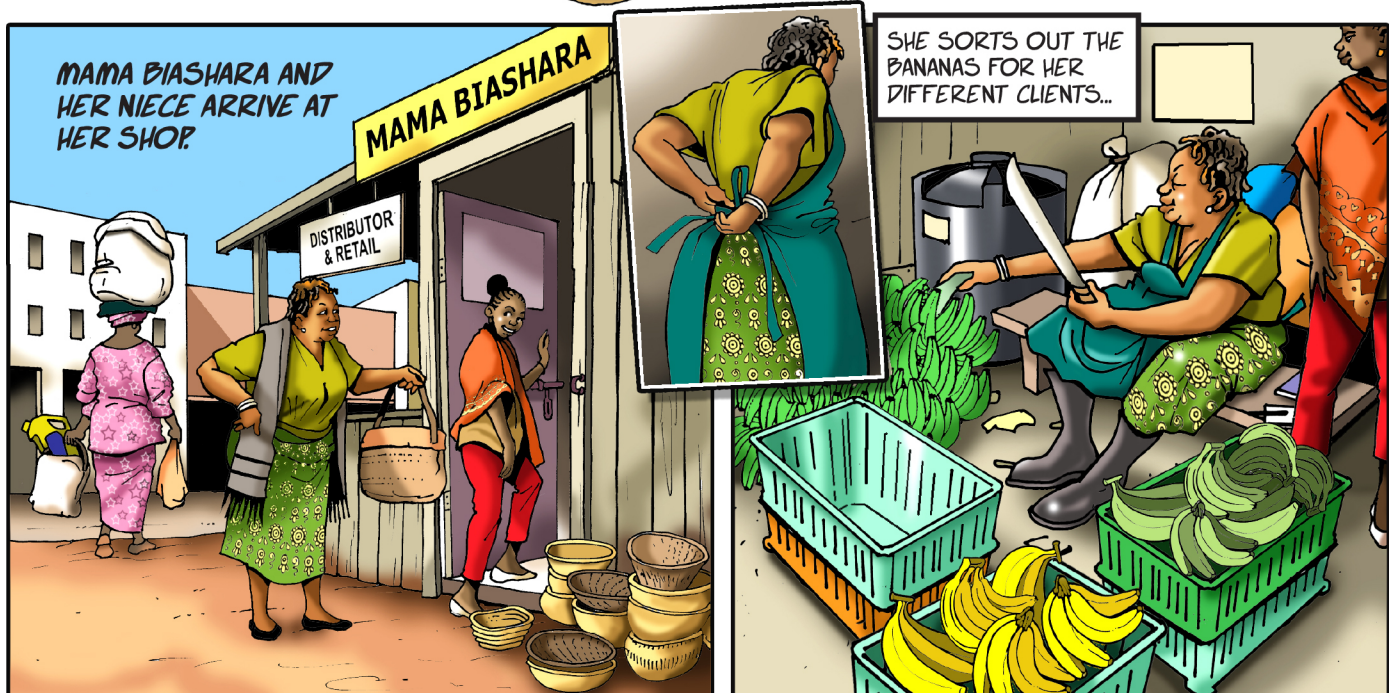
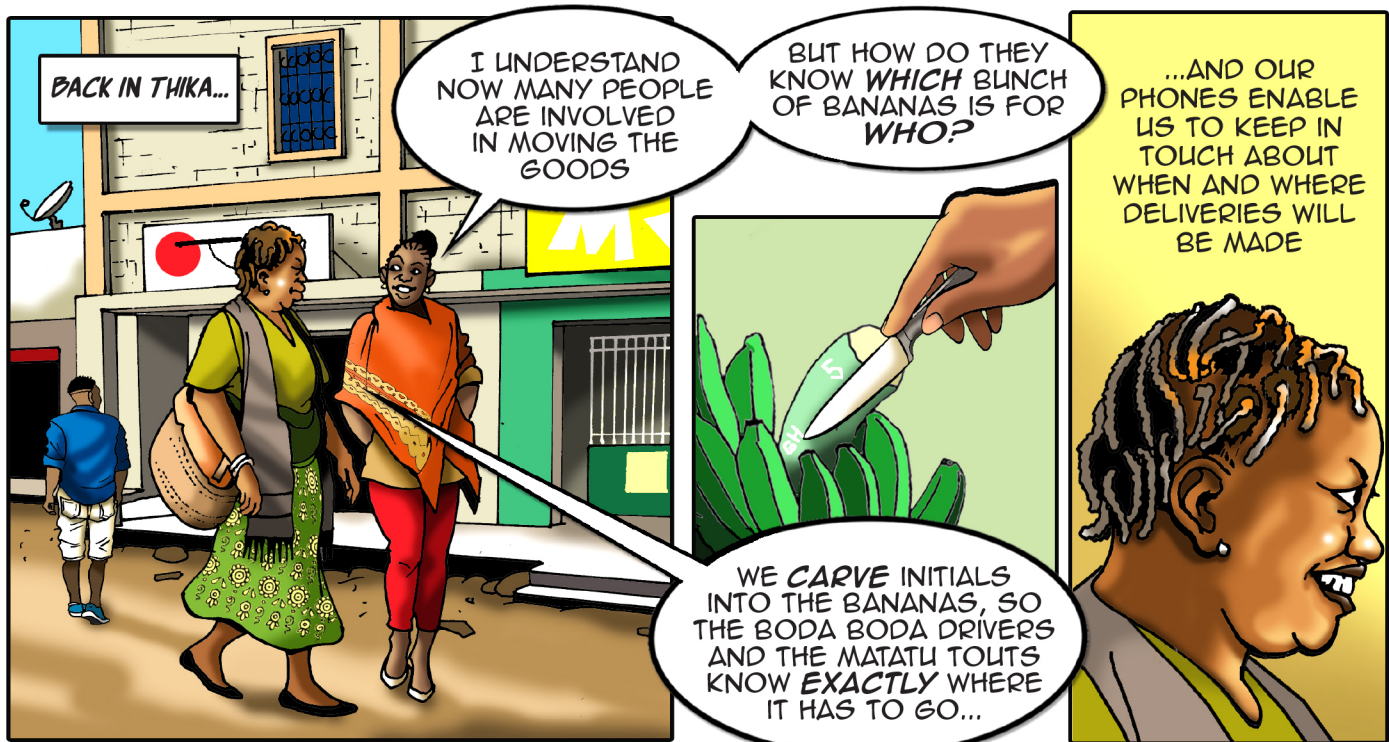
BUT DIGITAL PLATFORMS LIKE SUPATAXI ARE CREATING JOB OPPORTUNITIES, AREN'T THEY? ESPECIALLY FOR YOUNG PEOPLE?

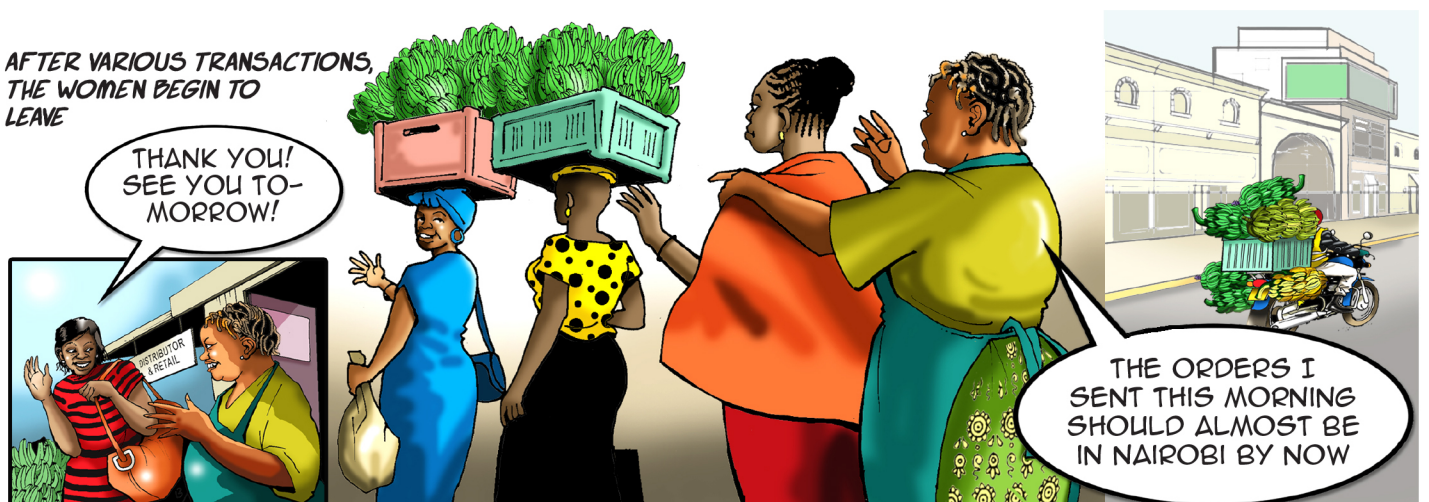
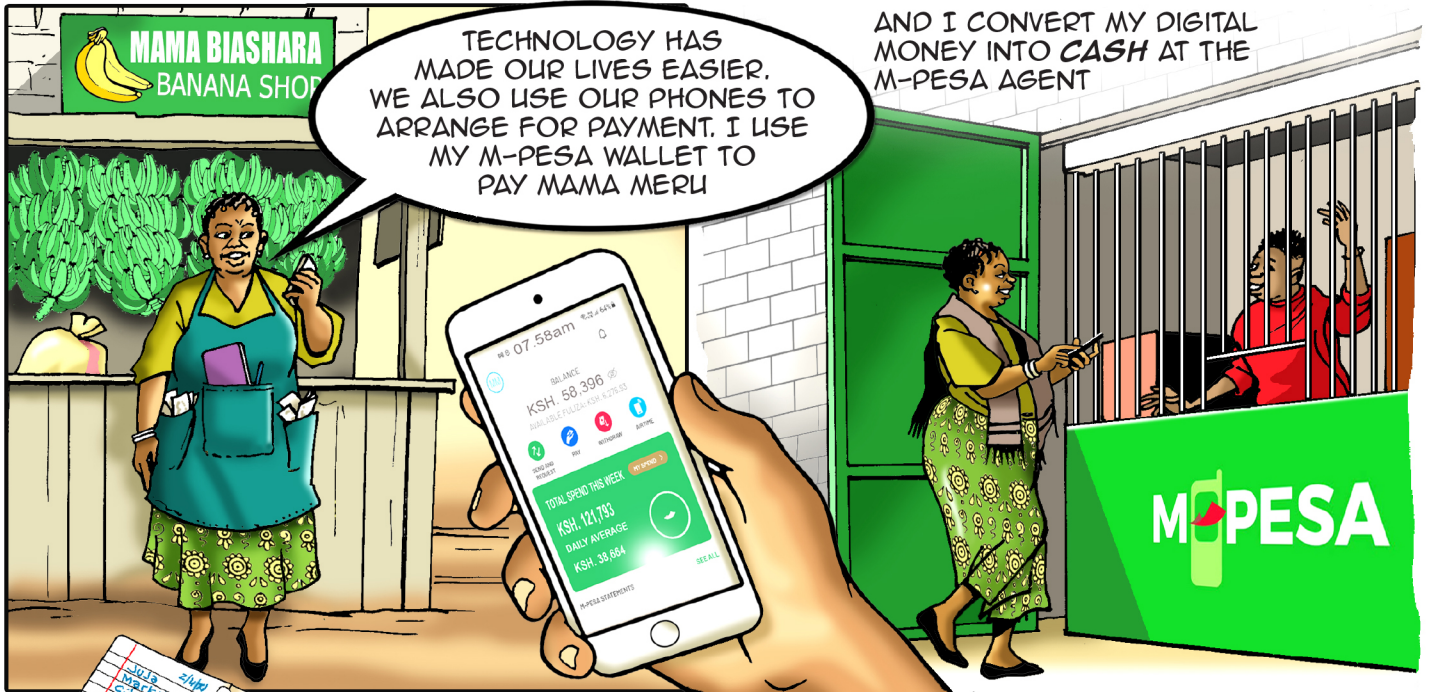
KARURA? WHAT'S THAT?

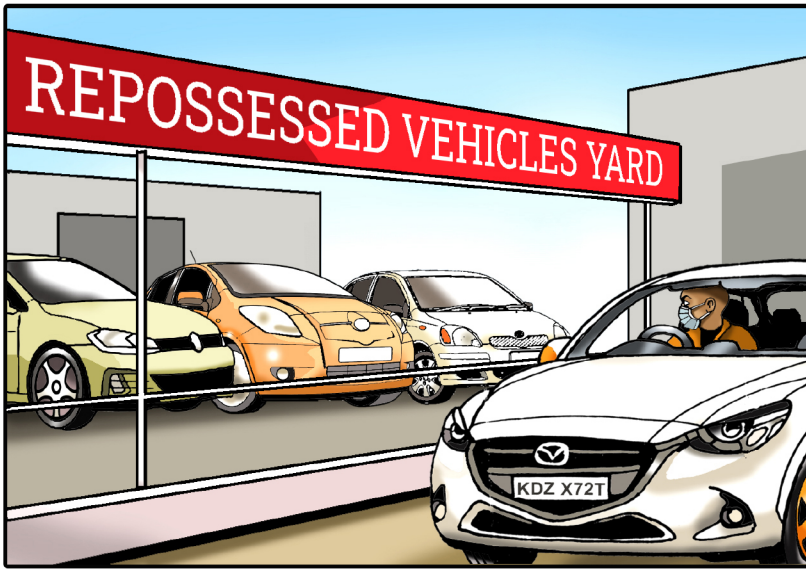
DON'T KNOW FOR SURE. WE SAY THAT WHEN WE LOG OFF, LIKE, WHEN YOU GO IN THE THICK OF A FOREST AND YOU GOT NO NETWORK. KARURA IS A FOREST HERE IN NAIROBI. IT'S ACTUALLY A PLACE WHERE THE MAU MAU HID DURING THE WAR AGAINST THE BRITISH COLONIALISTS. MAYBE IT'S BECAUSE WE'RE IN WAR AGAINST NEW COLONIALISTS. HEHE HEHE!

THAT MAYBE SO, BUT I AM NOT YOUNG ANYMORE. ALL I KNOW IS THAT I HAVE TO WORK HARD WITH LITTLE OR NO CAREER PROSPECT

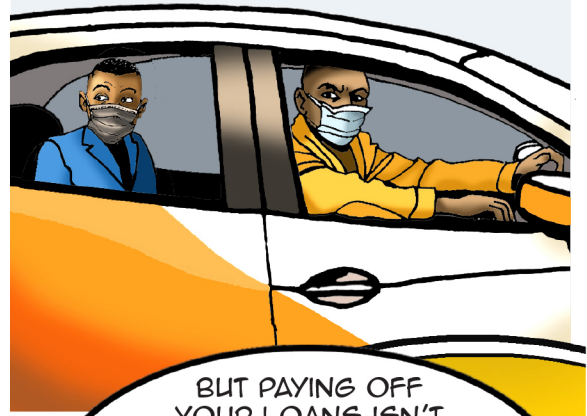




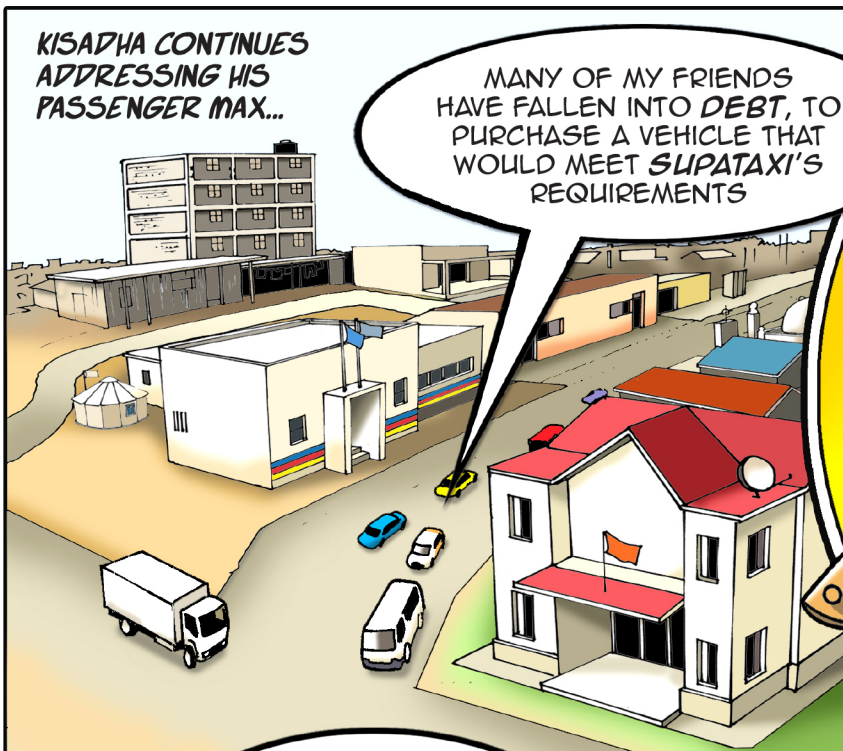




THE TAXI CRAWLS PAST NUMEROUS REPOSSESSED VEHICLE YARDS...

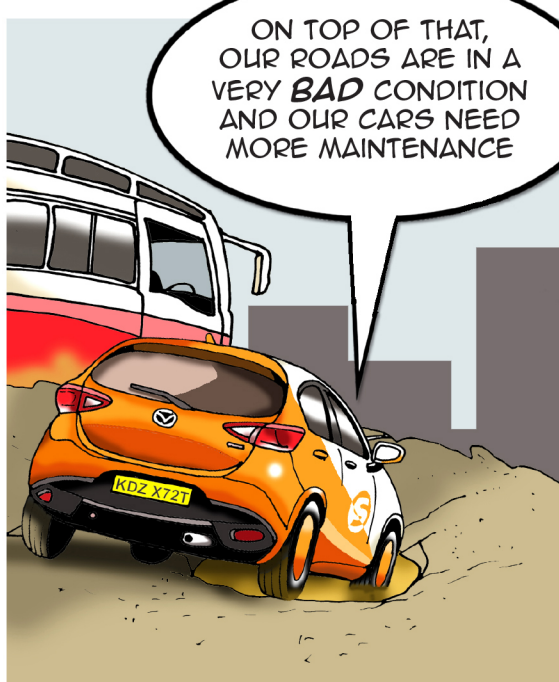
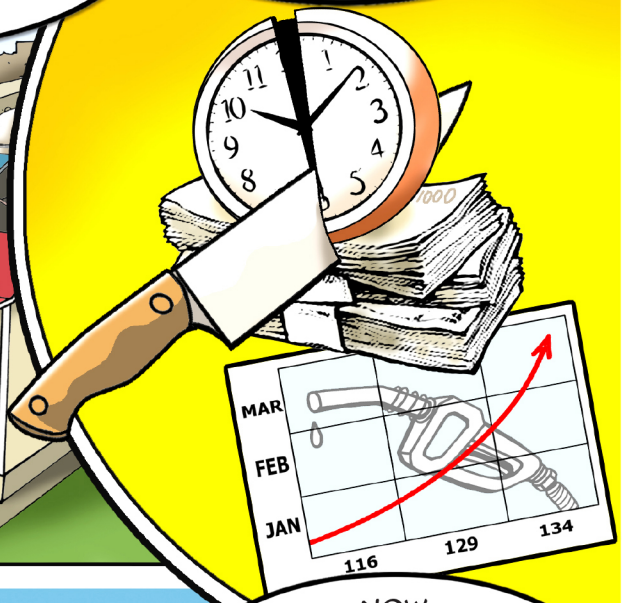


BUT PAYING OFF YOUR LOANS ISN'T POSSIBLE WHEN SUPATAXI CUTS YOUR PAY, AND THE AMOUNT OF HOURS YOU CAN WORK AND THE PRICE OF FUEL RISES DAY BY DAY

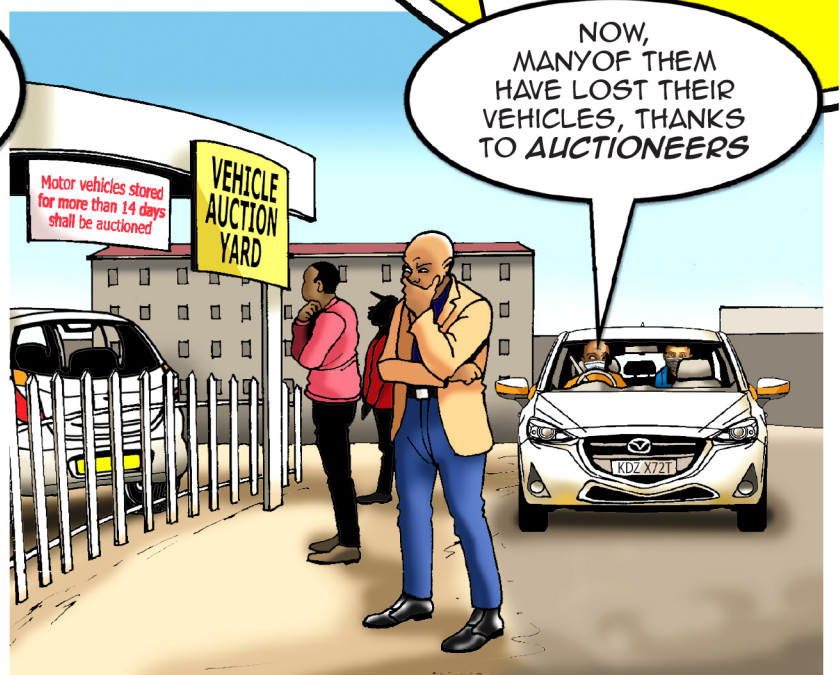


KISADHA CONTINUES ADDRESSING HIS PASSENGER MAX...

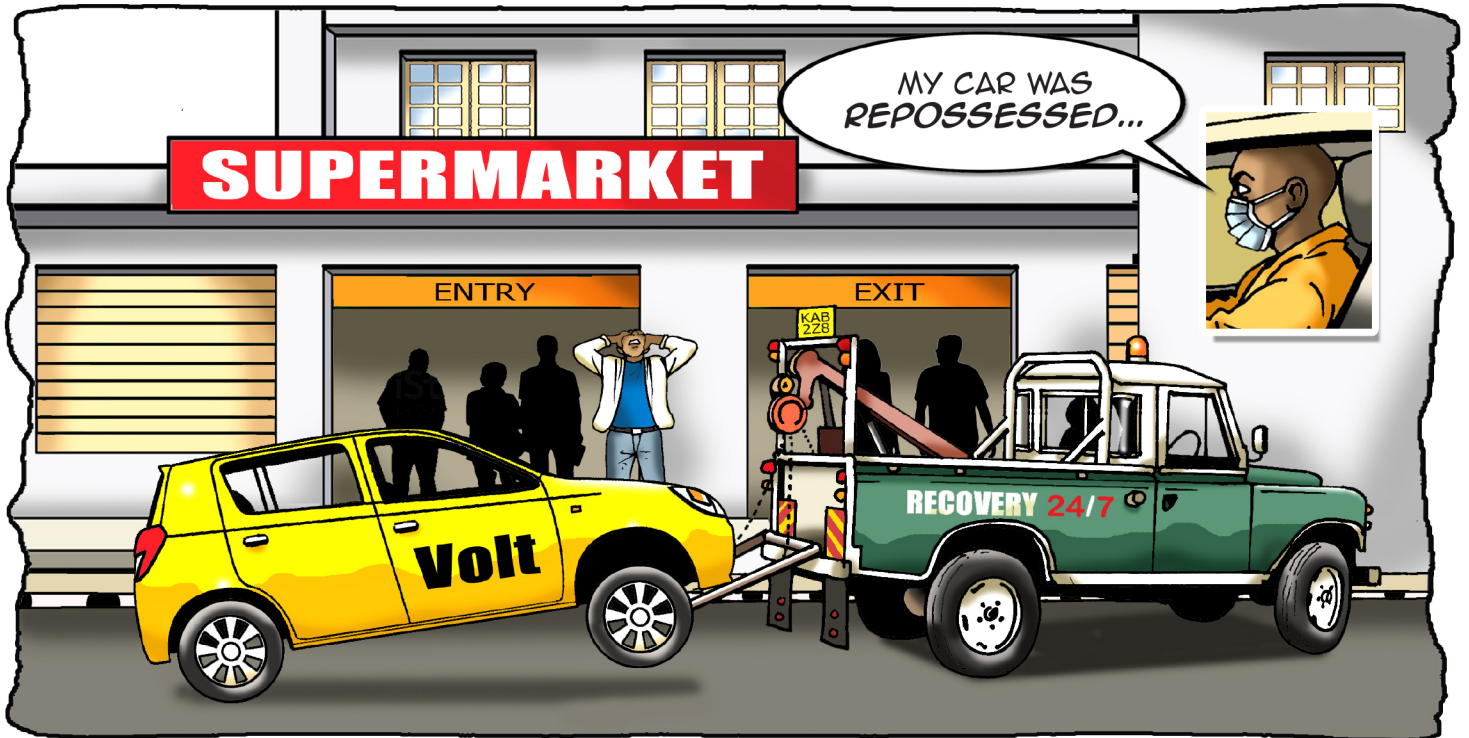
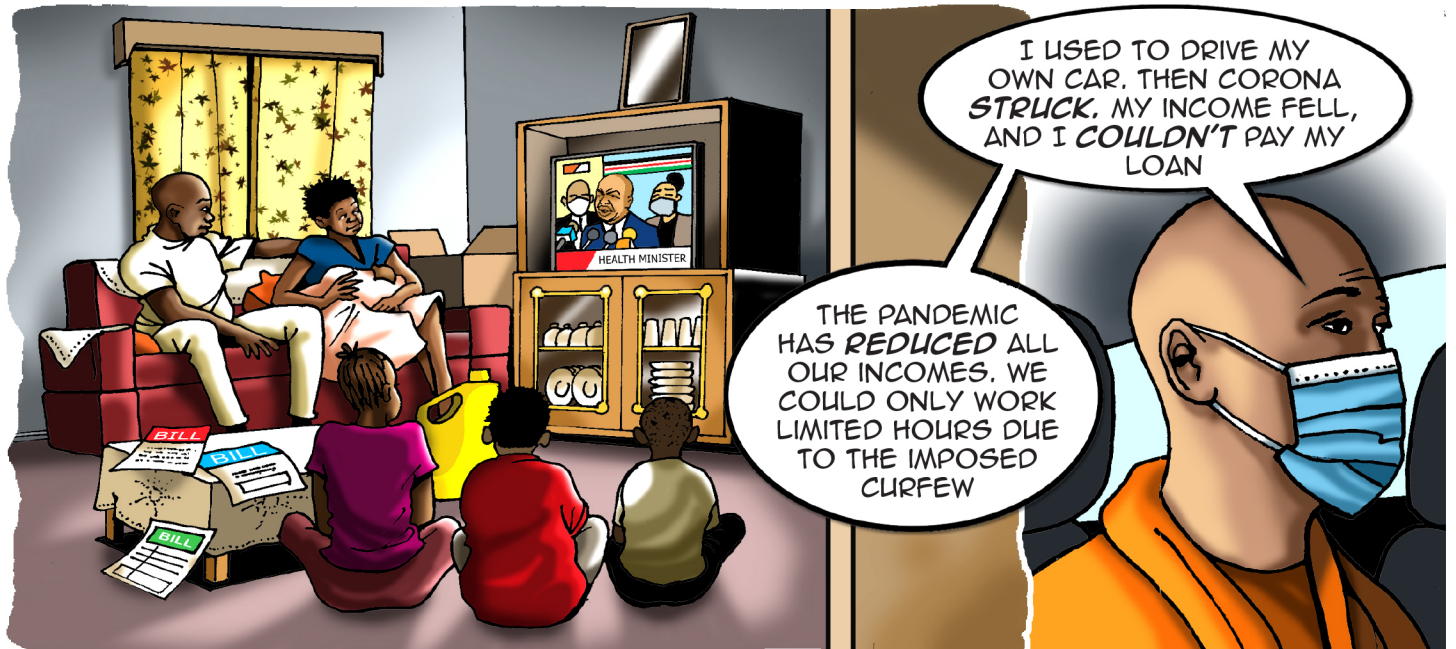
MANY OF MY FRIENDS HAVE FALLEN INTO DEBT, TO PURCHASE A VEHICLE THAT WOULD MEET SUPATAXI'S REQUIREMENTS



ON TOP OF THAT, OUR ROADS ARE IN A VERY BAD CONDITION AND OUR CARS NEED MORE MAINTENANCE



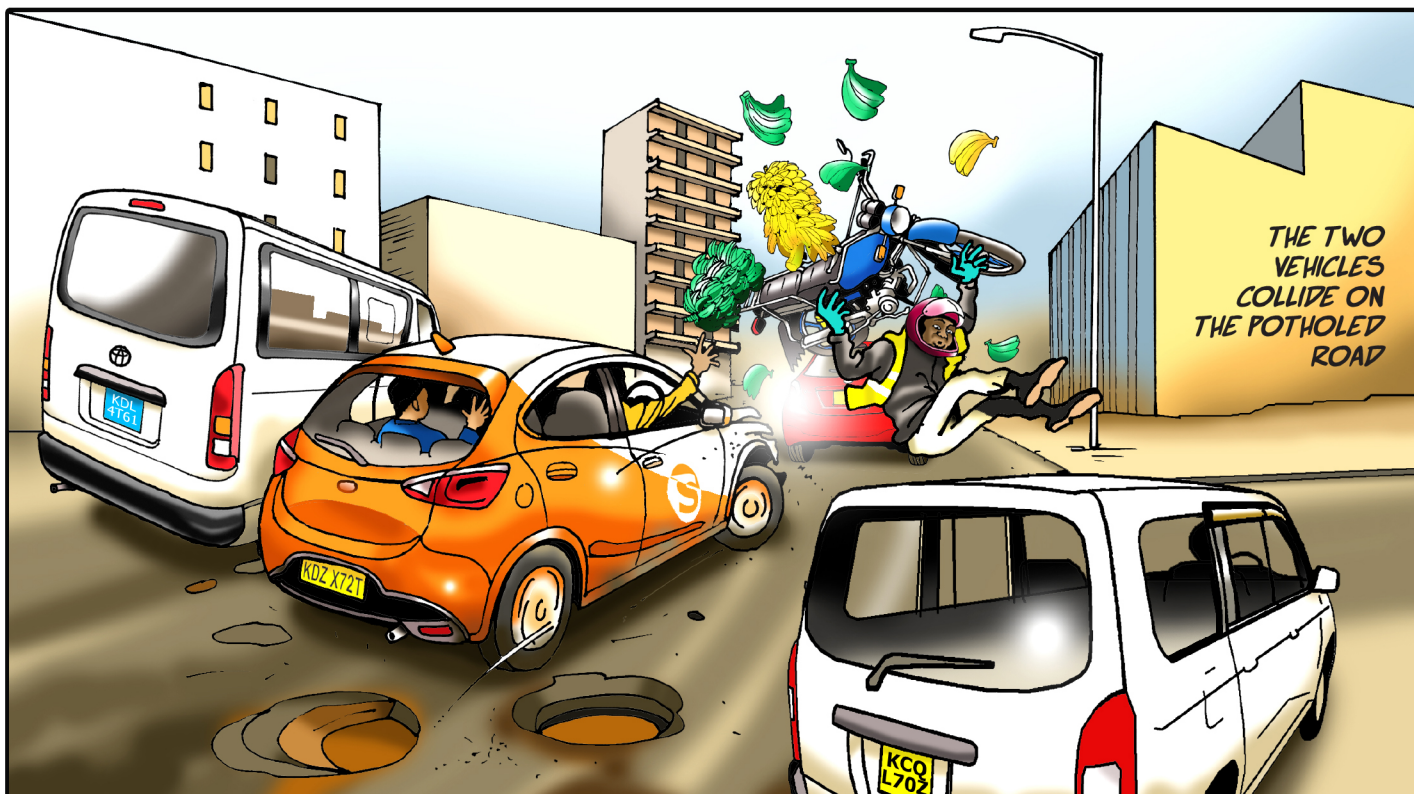
NOW, MANY OF THEM HAVE LOST THEIR VEHICLES, THANKS TO AUCTIONEERS





KISADHA'S CAR HITS AN EXCEPTIONALLY LARGE POTHOLE!

HE LOSES CONTROL...
...AND SWERVES RIGHT INTO THE PATH OF AN ONCOMING BODA BODA



THE TWO VEHICLES COLLIDE ON THE POTHOLED ROAD



LUCKILY, NO ONE IS HURT.

MAKE QUICK CASH
with SupaAp

WELL... DESPITE ALL OUR APPS, MOBILE MONEY AND CRYPTO-CURRENCIES, OUR ROADS ARE STILL FULL OF POTHOLES!

"Silicon Valley rocks!"

says one of the characters in our story.
Well, not for everybody.

With over 56 fintech firms and around eight digital taxi platforms, Kenya's digital ecosystem is breeding local entrepreneurs and luring foreign investors. Yet, the hype conceals a more nuanced picture. Some people have found a way to use digital technologies to their advantage; others feel betrayed by digital platforms that promised them better pay and more freedom.

You can check out other works where we've tried to render these nuances at

<http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/110950/>
<https://datarightsafrica.org/>
<https://kioneki.com/>

Story by **Gianluca Iazzolino** and **Michael Kimani**
Art by **Maddo – Cartoon Movement**

This comic has been funded by the **UK Research and Innovation** (UKRI) **Global Challenges Research Fund**, grant DIDA EP/T030127/1.

Our project brought together in 2020/21 a wide range of researchers, civil society organisations and tech-sector representatives who are active in Ethiopian, Kenyan and Somali contexts in order to explore how digitisation and datafication are reshaping public communications and the informal economy. Our network examined how the 'datafication' of everyday experiences and economic activity affects the nature of digital rights for citizens, vis-à-vis states, the market and each other.

Our network project is hosted at the
Firoz Lalji Institute for Africa
and the
London School of Economics and Political Science

<https://www.lse.ac.uk/africa>

Datafication and Digital Rights
<https://datarightsafrica.org/>



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