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UGANDA

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Panelists reported few improvements in Uganda's media sector this year and in fact moderately downgraded the country's score compared with 2010. On several occasions over the year, the president, his ministers, and government officials openly declared their intent to close down any media house that reports negatively about the government. A number of journalists, especially from private media houses, were summoned by police for questioning at the Criminal Investigations Directorate headquarters and grilled over stories the government deemed critical.

Many of these charges do not advance to courts of law, and end up dying at police bureaus for lack of evidence—but not before they instill a sense of fear and intimidate journalists. Further, several journalists working for private media lost their jobs following complaints from government officials.

This situation is expected to worsen. The media is intensifying its coverage of corruption within the current government. Reports abound of the ruling party's oppression and harassment of opposition leaders and opposition parties. The government continues to deny the opposition any platform to air their views, and on many occasions, it has used its armed agents to disperse, arrest, and beat up people in gatherings suspected of addressing political issues. The media covering these gatherings have not been spared, either, suffering injuries and having their equipment either confiscated or damaged by security personnel.

Despite all these problems, the media in Uganda have improved in terms of service delivery, with ever-improving access to modern equipment. On the downside, the current government uses this progress as a cover-up to claim that there is a lot of press freedom in the country.

Not all problems facing the media stem from external pressures. Corruption within the media profession persists, but some of Uganda's major media houses have taken a proactive stance on this. A number of journalists caught accepting bribes from sources have lost their jobs. However, there is a sense that corruption is increasing, and the MSI panelists believe that the low pay—and the disparity in pay between editors and lower-level reporters—is harming the profession's reputation. Employers continue to take advantage of freelance journalists, who constitute a majority in the trade, paying them little to nothing. In a positive turn, some trade associations have successfully defended journalists against such violations, although the success has been limited to date.

# UGANDA AT A GLANCE

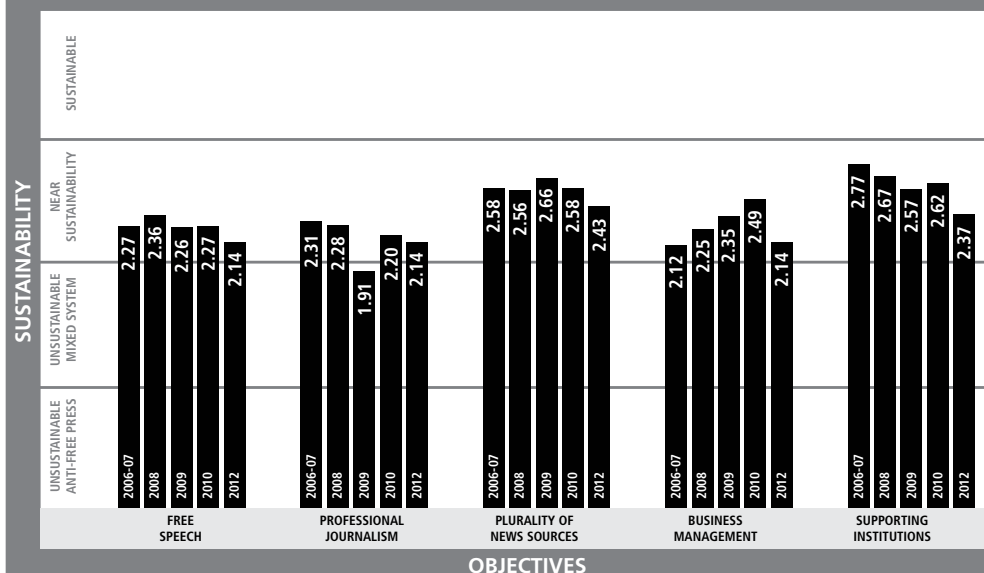
## GENERAL

- > **Population:** 33,640,833 (2012 est., *CIA World Factbook*)
- > **Capital city:** Kampala
- > **Ethnic groups (% of population):** Baganda 16.9%, Banyakole 9.5%, Basoga 8.4%, Bakiga 6.9%, Iteso 6.4%, Langi 6.1%, Acholi 4.7%, Bagisu 4.6%, Lugbara 4.2%, Bunyoro 2.7%, other 29.6% (2002 census, *CIA World Factbook*)
- > **Religions (% of population):** Roman Catholic 41.9%, Protestant 42%, Muslim 12.1%, other 3.1%, none 0.9% (2002 census, *CIA World Factbook*)
- > **Languages (% of population):** English (official national language), Ganda or Luganda (most widely used of the Niger-Congo languages), other Niger-Congo languages, Nilo-Saharan languages, Swahili, Arabic (*CIA World Factbook*)
- > **GNI (2011-Atlas):** \$17.458 billion (World Bank Development Indicators, 2012)
- > **GNI per capita (2011-PPP):** \$1,320 (World Bank Development Indicators, 2012)
- > **Literacy rate:** 66.8% (male 76.8%, female 57.7%) (2002 census, *CIA World Factbook*)
- > **President or top authority:** President Lt. Gen. Yoweri Kaguta Museveni (since January 26, 1986)

## MEDIA-SPECIFIC

- > **Number of active print outlets, radio stations, television stations:**  
Print: 5 daily newspapers, 6 weekly newspapers, several magazines;  
Radio Stations: 200; Television Stations: 60 registered, 42 in operation
- > **Newspaper circulation statistics:** Top three by circulation: *The New Vision* (60% state-owned, 40% public shareholders; 40,000 circulation); *The Monitor* (privately owned, 15,000 circulation); *Bukedde* (60% state-owned, 40% public shareholders; 32,000 circulation)
- > **Broadcast ratings:** Top three radio stations: Central Broadcasting Service FM (private), Akaboozi FM (private), Bukedde FM (55% state-owned, 45% share holders)
- > **News agencies:** Uganda Radio Network (private), Ultimate Media (private)
- > **Annual advertising revenue in media sector:** \$10 million (2007)
- > **Internet usage:** 3.2 million (2009 est., *CIA World Factbook*)

## MEDIA SUSTAINABILITY INDEX UGANDA



### Unsustainable, Anti-Free Press (0-1):

Country does not meet or only minimally meets objectives. Government and laws actively hinder free media development, professionalism is low, and media-industry activity is minimal.

### Unsustainable Mixed System (1-2):

Country minimally meets objectives, with segments of the legal system and government opposed to a free media system. Evident progress in free-press advocacy, increased professionalism, and new media businesses may be too recent to judge sustainability.

### Near Sustainability (2-3):

Country has progressed in meeting multiple objectives, with legal norms, professionalism, and the business environment supportive of independent media. Advances have survived changes in government and have been codified in law and practice. However, more time may be needed to ensure that change is enduring and that increased professionalism and the media business environment are sustainable.

### Sustainable (3-4):

Country has media that are considered generally professional, free, and sustainable, or to be approaching these objectives. Systems supporting independent media have survived multiple governments, economic fluctuations, and changes in public opinion or social conventions.

## OBJECTIVE 1: FREEDOM OF SPEECH

### Uganda Objective Score: 2.14

Panelists agreed that the Ugandan constitution remains one of best in the region, guaranteeing the freedom of association and freedom of the press. However, they noted that these ideals live mostly on paper. In practice, many other laws contradict the principles of free speech and undermine the constitution. Examples include the Anti-Terrorism Act, the Press and Journalists Act of 1995, and the provision under the penal code that deals with publishing “false news.” The last was nullified by the courts but Saulo Wokulira Ssebaggala, Jr., a program coordinator for the Human Rights Network for Journalists, pointed out that the government persisted in charging a journalist under those provisions. He was later acquitted by a magistrate.

“The media is under threat; we still remember what happened in 2009, when some radio stations were closed down by government and many of our colleagues lost jobs. We cannot rule out a recurrence given the current situation and intimidation from government,” said Rose Kigongo, a correspondent for Bukedde FM.

Barbara Nakazinga, a lecturer for Kampala University, refuted these allegations. She said that there is ample press freedom, and freedom of association in the country, as guaranteed by the constitution. She believes that on many occasions,

irresponsible journalists have violated these freedoms and misinformed the public, inciting violence.

Regarding broadcast licensing, panelists agreed that it is easy to acquire a first license. However, when that license expires, media that have dared to criticize the government may find it difficult to secure a renewal. The licensing power is entrusted to the Uganda Communications Commission, which is appointed by the minister for information (who is in turn appointed by the president). “There are some investors we know who applied for licenses to start media houses or radio stations, and the government, through its licensing body, has refused to grant them licenses for over a decade now,” one panelist said.

The panelists were split over the ease of entry into the media market. Some feel it is free, depending on your capital base, while others insist that market entry is not easy, especially for those known for having ties to the opposition.

Crimes against the media have increased, and many believe the Uganda police are often behind these abuses. Ssebaggala’s organization, which fights for media freedom in Uganda, reported 52 attacks on journalists in 2012. Other panelists concur that attacks against the media are on the rise. A number of journalists were illegally arrested on trumped-up charges; others were beaten up by security operatives; and still others were kidnapped and kept in unknown places for days and released later without being charged. All this goes on with impunity, with the perpetrators remaining at large.

Panelists accused both the government and society at-large of harassing journalists and damaging their equipment. However, one panelist, Ahmed Kateregga, a political editor for *Bukedde News*, feels that some journalists are to blame for these ills, because they take sides politically and are seen as partisan.

When it comes to covering state functions, panelists agreed that the media is given equal treatment, both private and state-owned. However, they said, both private and public media lack editorial independence; the owners decide what comes out of their media. However, the panelists agreed that this is especially true in state media.

Libel remains under the jurisdiction of both criminal and civil courts and it is up to journalists to prove their innocence. However, such cases are often delayed by the prosecution to buy time—because, the panelists surmise, they lack evidence.

When it comes to access to public information, the panelists agreed that it is easy to obtain information that is not critical of the government, or which the government wants to disseminate. Any other information might be classified as “confidential,” even when that label is unwarranted.

## LEGAL AND SOCIAL NORMS PROTECT AND PROMOTE FREE SPEECH AND ACCESS TO PUBLIC INFORMATION.

### FREE-SPEECH INDICATORS:

- > Legal and social protections of free speech exist and are enforced.
- > Licensing of broadcast media is fair, competitive, and apolitical.
- > Market entry and tax structure for media are fair and comparable to other industries.
- > Crimes against journalists or media outlets are prosecuted vigorously, but occurrences of such crimes are rare.
- > State or public media do not receive preferential legal treatment, and law guarantees editorial independence.
- > Libel is a civil law issue; public officials are held to higher standards, and offended parties must prove falsity and malice.
- > Public information is easily accessible; right of access to information is equally enforced for all media and journalists.
- > Media outlets have unrestricted access to information; this is equally enforced for all media and journalists.
- > Entry into the journalism profession is free, and government imposes no licensing, restrictions, or special rights for journalists.

Uganda has an access to information act in place, but some government officials do not respect it. Anyone who needs information may use court channels, and there is a precedent for success. For example, when *Monitor* journalists sought information on oil in Uganda, the government initially refused to release this information until the paper petitioned the Constitutional Court.

There are still no restrictions on accessing either local or international news sources.

Entry into the journalism profession is free, but panelists believe that this has affected the quality and professional standards of the media in Uganda. The image of the profession has been damaged, but the law should be amended to allow the media to regulate itself, they believe.

Some panelists said that provisions in the Press and Journalists Act of 1995 contradict freedom of the press by requiring every journalist to have a practicing license, which must be renewed annually. The law allows only those with degrees and diplomas to practice after acquiring licenses.

## OBJECTIVE 2: PROFESSIONAL JOURNALISM

### Uganda Objective Score: 2.14

The majority of the panelists said that they see great improvement in the way journalists from different media houses, both electronic and print, source their stories, adding that this is also reflected in the quality of print publications and news programs produced on both radio and television in Uganda.

#### JOURNALISM MEETS PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS OF QUALITY.

##### PROFESSIONAL JOURNALISM INDICATORS:

- > Reporting is fair, objective, and well sourced.
- > Journalists follow recognized and accepted ethical standards.
- > Journalists and editors do not practice self-censorship.
- > Journalists cover key events and issues.
- > Pay levels for journalists and other media professionals are sufficiently high to discourage corruption.
- > Entertainment programming does not eclipse news and information programming.
- > Technical facilities and equipment for gathering, producing, and distributing news are modern and efficient.
- > Quality niche reporting and programming exists (investigative, economics/business, local, political).

However, a few of the panelists insist that some journalists still lack objectivity, while others lack even the basic skills of journalism, attributing their shortcomings to a lack of proper training and the low pay they earn.

“Many of the media houses show little interest in investing in training. The journalists they recruit fresh out of college receive no further in-house training after they are hired,” one of the panelists concluded.

Uganda’s media recognize a code of ethics endorsed by the Journalists Associations and a number of media house managers; panelists believe it to be in line with international standards. Not all journalists abide by its principles, however. Frequent violations include accepting bribes to run or kill certain stories. Another panelist added that journalists line up for money at press conferences and for food coupons at functions, while others demand refunds for transportation from event organizers.

“Enforcement of the code of ethics has not been easy, because government, and also some media houses, fail to recognize the body that is supposed to police it, the Independent Media Council,” noted Kateregga.

However, panelists reported that big media houses like Vision Group, the Monitor, NTV and others have taken a proactive stance on this, and if any of their journalists are found taking a bribe, they may end up being dismissed. They reported that in the period under review, about seven journalists from three media houses lost their jobs for taking bribes to kill stories.

Panelists agreed that this problem cuts across all media, however, some media houses and associations have come out strongly to fight this habit by exposing those involved in such acts.

Self-censorship is practiced at all levels in the media for a number of reasons, ranging from journalists’ fear of losing their jobs or getting arrested, the government clamping down on media houses, or financial gains—either on a personal level, or at the organizational level, with companies wary of losing ad revenue.

Panelists defended some big media houses that have published controversial pieces, but noted at times some of the managers end up losing their jobs. For example, the top management of one major media house was forced to leave because of a story about Uganda’s prime minister’s office.

Still, most key events in the country are covered, although a few smaller media houses are not invited to all events—especially when it comes to major national events. Some key events and functions require clearance for journalists to cover

them, a process managed by the Government Media Centre in coordination with the editors of different media houses. These events include president's functions and the first lady, visiting heads of state, and all major conferences where foreign visitors are expected.

Security issues are often off-limits, as well. "Covering security issues in Uganda is not easy; a journalist must be cleared first by the authorities," said one panelists, who added that journalists are often expected to put ethics aside and write what the authorities provide, or risk serious trouble.

The panelists noted that only a few journalists working for big media houses are paid fairly. The majority of their colleagues are paid poorly, and some are not paid at all and only work to build their name in the field. Other journalists working for small media houses like FM radio stations depend on sources for survival: the moment a story is published or aired, the journalist gets paid by the source.

"Some owners of media houses do not care about their employees; they are merely interested in profits. This poor pay has pushed journalists out of the profession and into other sectors where they can expect to earn better pay," said Julian Atumuhairwe, news editor of KFM Radio station.

Stephen Ouma, the general secretary of the Journalists Trade Union, noted that a survey carried out in of 2010 on working conditions and pay for journalists indicated that journalists are the most poorly paid people in the country. All of the panelists agreed that because of low wages, corruption in the media has gone up, with clear and damaging consequences to professional standards.

The Journalists' Trade Union, which is supposed to handle such concerns by law, has been able to make little headway in this regard. The disparity between highly paid editors and a few senior journalists and the rest of their colleagues remains high. Some editors earn as much as \$10,000 a month, while a reporter working under him at the lowest level gets \$200.

Although entertainment takes the biggest part of programming in electronic media, information is also slotted in whenever it is needed, on top of the hourly news bulletin. However, panelists added that in the print media, the situation is different—news tends to receive more space than entertainment.

In radio, one panelist commented, "Music attracts more listenership, especially among youth, and the bigger the audience the more advertising business a station can win. In electronic media, entertainment takes about 70 percent while news and information shares 30 percent. On the print side, ads take up about 40 percent of pages."

The panelists reported major improvements in the facilities and equipment used for gathering, producing, and distributing news, especially in urban centers, which has been reflected in the quality of work produced. More rural areas, however, have not kept up with the pace of progress.

The panelists mainly attribute the improvements to the efforts made by big media houses to invest in modern equipment, and to give out interest-free loans to freelance journalists who want to upgrade their equipment. They see a need for greater assistance to freelance journalists, in terms of video and still digital cameras, digital audio recorders, laptops, and computers to help build up bureaus that could serve as a shared base for freelancers.

"This could be handled through a consultancy, through which freelance journalists could be organized, trained, and eventually manage these centers," suggested one panelist.

Panelists also believe that specialized and niche reporting has improved greatly, both in print and electronic media, and they attribute this to the training investments of certain media houses. However, the panelists agreed that small media houses simply do not have the resources to provide this type of training. In such houses, it is not uncommon to find an editor doubling as a reporter and photographer.

### OBJECTIVE 3: PLURALITY OF NEWS

#### Uganda Objective Score: 2.43

Citizens can turn to a multitude of different sources of news and information. The many choices include print media, online media, television, radio, SMS media, blogs, Twitter and YouTube.

However, residents in rural areas depend mostly on community radio for information, and most of them use small battery-powered radio sets. The sustainability of community radio stations remains challenging, though, because they do not attract a lot of advertising. The government has set up channels for the state radio to serve communities living in rural areas.

The panelists agreed that people living in cities and urban centers have greater access to media sources than their rural counterparts. Some of these sources, such as the Internet and print media, are expensive for people in rural villages.

The government does not restrict citizens' access to other domestic or international news, as shown by the range of foreign publications imported into the country. As in previous years, the panelists agreed that little has changed on Internet access, as the government puts no restrictions

on its accessibility. Only the cost and availability hamper access for some Ugandans—but the sense is that overall, access is improving. “The cost of Internet access has reduced drastically, and it spreading out even in remote areas—schools and other institutions—with help from government efforts,” one panelist said.

However, another panelist said that despite the impression that there are no restrictions on accessing the Internet, the government at times has blocked some websites that were deemed a threat to national security.

Panelists commended the public media for exercising a degree of independence while doing their work, which they said has helped it to compete favorably with the private media. The public media, both UBC TV (Uganda Broadcasting Corporation) and UBC Radio, host a number of opposition politicians who are given talk show programs to air out their views. In fact, Ouma said, “It is the private media which is more biased; it is mainly owned by politicians with their own interests who dictate what they want on their radio and television stations.”

However, the government still maintains a lot of control over the public media. It appoints its managers, generally dictates what is to be aired, and dominates airtime with government programs and propaganda. On the other hand, it goes an extra mile in filling the gap left by commercial broadcasters in educational and cultural programming.

The panelists noted that the government does not fully own any newspaper, after it partially privatized *New Vision*, which is now the biggest media house in the country, and the

region. However, they added that much as the company is partly owned by shareholders in the public, the government still appoints its CEO and the majority of the board members, hence exerting some influence through its representatives.

Another development the panelists reported is the emergence of a second private news agency, Ultimate Media, joining Uganda Radio Network. Despite its affordability, the reviews so far have not been strong, though, particularly for its electronic media products. Their products, including video, audio, and text, are mainly sold to small media houses with no correspondents, upcountry. There are also foreign news agencies like AFP, AP, Reuters, but their services are costly and out of reach for small media houses. In addition to these sources, media houses also use news websites at no cost, but credit them as a source.

Panelists agreed that most private broadcast media produce much of their news and information programs locally, generally surpassing those of their public counterparts in terms of content quality. In contrast, some panelists complained that many bloggers in the country, and some small FM radio stations, lift stories from big media houses and publish or air them without any changes. In television programming, the panel reported an increase in consumption of locally produced programs.

Media ownership is transparent, and anyone interested can obtain ownership information from the registrar of companies. However, the public is more interested in the content than the ownership, the panelists believe.

Vision Media Group has continued to dominate the media industry in Uganda. It opened up two new television stations in 2012: Urban TV and Bukedde TV 2, as well as two more FM radio stations. It also invested heavily in online media. Nation Media Group and Citizen Media Group from Kenya also plan to enter the Ugandan market.

These investments in the media have created more employment opportunities in the country for both journalists and other professionals, driven more tax revenue to the government, and delivered a growing variety of media in different local languages to the public.

Still, minority languages are not a high priority for most media investors. Social issues are well covered in all media, although homosexuality is only covered with a negative tone.

#### MULTIPLE NEWS SOURCES PROVIDE CITIZENS WITH RELIABLE AND OBJECTIVE NEWS.

##### PLURALITY OF NEWS SOURCES INDICATORS:

- > A plurality of affordable public and private news sources (e.g., print, broadcast, Internet) exists.
- > Citizens' access to domestic or international media is not restricted.
- > State or public media reflect the views of the entire political spectrum, are nonpartisan, and serve the public interest.
- > Independent news agencies gather and distribute news for print and broadcast media.
- > Independent broadcast media produce their own news programs.
- > Transparency of media ownership allows consumers to judge objectivity of news; media ownership is not concentrated in a few conglomerates.
- > A broad spectrum of social interests are reflected and represented in the media, including minority-language information sources.

## OBJECTIVE 4: BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

### Uganda Objective Score: 2.14

Most bigger media houses, both private and public, are efficiently managed as profit-making businesses, with proper planning, the panelists believe. Media owners hire properly trained staff, with some media houses hiring foreign experts—at substantial cost—to staff the business end of operations.

Small media houses, though, are not run as professionally. Some launch as family ventures, typically employing under-qualified relatives in significant positions. Many such businesses eventually close down. Other small media house owners cannot afford to hire professionals.

Turning to community media, the panelists reported a need for a stronger business model that emphasizes self-sustainability. Most community media depend on donor funds, which typically come in grants to cover a limited time period—and once money is finished they either collapse or limp along.

Media in Uganda earn revenue from multiple sources, ranging from copy sales, advertising, commercial printing, donations, and sponsored programs. However, the panelists noted that these sources—including big mobile telephone companies, real estate dealers, and breweries—frequently influence the editorial policies of the different media houses.

Public broadcast media outlets are fully funded by the government, but on several occasions the money has ended up being swindled because of poor supervision. Public media

are also permitted to raise revenue from other sources, such as commercial advertisements and sponsored programs.

Advertising is well developed in the country, with several local and international advertising firms, and it continues to grow. Major companies offer advertisements to the media, both electronic and print, either directly or through agencies. Many media houses have set up advertising departments with well-qualified personnel tasked to solicit advertisements from big companies.

Some of the many advertising agencies in the country include ZDK, Fireworks, Moringa, and Media Age. Most of these firms are centered in urban areas, and they have a lot of influence on the media because of the money they pay to them.

While there are various sources of revenue for media houses, advertising forms the biggest portion of revenue for media houses, and the government is the biggest advertiser.

Given the competition for resources, though, managers tend to give more space to advertising over news in print media. The same applies to electronic media, where more time is allocated to commercials than programming. Statistics show that advertising consumes more than 50 percent of the broadcast programming time, while advertisements in print media take up about 40 percent of pages.

The panelists reported little change from previous years regarding government subsidies, but noted that the government continues to give business to private media through advertisements, which they do not hesitate to use to negotiate for fair and positive coverage in return.

A few media houses carry out market research to evaluate their performance in terms of sales, listenership, program quality, geographic reach, and audience needs. Among the few media houses that carry out research are Vision Group, and the *Monitor* (under Nation Media Group). The panelists confirmed that media houses that carry out research use the results to improve in their service delivery. Some companies conduct market research on their own, through call-in programs, questionnaires, or by hiring specialized firms.

Two companies produce circulation figures and broadcast ratings: the Audit Bureau of Circulation, based in South Africa, and Synovate. Their findings can easily be accessed by anybody, including all media outlets—but for a fee. The panelists agreed that some media houses have begun to challenge the authenticity of the findings by these research companies.

#### INDEPENDENT MEDIA ARE WELL-MANAGED BUSINESSES, ALLOWING EDITORIAL INDEPENDENCE.

##### BUSINESS MANAGEMENT INDICATORS:

- > Media outlets and supporting firms operate as efficient, professional, and profit-generating businesses.
- > Media receive revenue from a multitude of sources.
- > Advertising agencies and related industries support an advertising market.
- > Advertising revenue as a percentage of total revenue is in line with accepted standards at commercial outlets.
- > Independent media do not receive government subsidies.
- > Market research is used to formulate strategic plans, enhance advertising revenue, and tailor products to the needs and interests of audiences.
- > Broadcast ratings and circulation figures are reliably and independently produced.



## OBJECTIVE 5: SUPPORTING INSTITUTIONS

### Uganda Objective Score: 2.37

Two more media owner associations, Uganda Media Owners Association and Uganda Broadcasters Association, grew more active in 2012, joining the National Association of Broadcasters, which had been the only instrumental organization advocating for media owners' rights.

The three associations came out on several occasions to defend the rights of their members when they came under attack by the government. They also challenged the government on its plans to increase taxes on media related equipment, and on the VAT on advertising.

Other media owners associations exist, but they are not active, such as the Uganda Newspaper Editors and Proprietors Association, the Uganda Publisher's Association, and the Editor's Forum. The panel noted that by 2012, more new journalism associations had been launched, but with few distinguishing features in terms of leadership and objectives or goals. However, these associations are likely to face similar problems, such as the difficulties of fundraising and maintaining independence from government influences.

On the other hand, membership of the existing journalists associations continued to decline, as members saw few benefits. Others are on the verge of closing down due to lack of resources.

Existing journalists' associations include The Uganda Media Women Association; Uganda Journalists Association, which handles professional issues; Uganda Journalists Union, a trade union; Parliamentary Press Association; and other small

#### SUPPORTING INSTITUTIONS FUNCTION IN THE PROFESSIONAL INTERESTS OF INDEPENDENT MEDIA.

##### SUPPORTING INSTITUTIONS INDICATORS:

- > Trade associations represent the interests of private media owners and provide member services.
- > Professional associations work to protect journalists' rights.
- > NGOs support free speech and independent media.
- > Quality journalism degree programs that provide substantial practical experience exist.
- > Short-term training and in-service training programs allow journalists to upgrade skills or acquire new skills.
- > Sources of newsprint and printing facilities are in private hands, apolitical, and unrestricted.
- > Channels of media distribution (kiosks, transmitters, Internet) are private, apolitical, and unrestricted.

associations for specific sectors such as sports, oil and mining, environment, education, health, etc.

Panelists reported that membership to all these associations is open, and even formation and registration of new journalists' associations in the country is open, without any restrictions from the government.

Several NGOs in the country work with the media—or use the media to tap money from donors. They include African Leadership Institute, Human Rights Network for Journalists, Foundation for Human Rights Initiative, Human Rights Center, the Journalists' Safety Committee, and many others.

Education for journalists is still lacking; the panelists complained of the poor quality graduates produced by many of the universities and other media training institutions. They noted that many of them fail to gain serious employment in the existing media houses. Efforts are being made by universities to address the declining standard and the poor quality and outdated equipment that students use.

Training opportunities abroad are still available, but only a few journalists are able to take advantage of them. Most students who study abroad return to Uganda, although they do not always stay with the media house that sponsored their study.

Some larger media houses organize short-term in-house training programs for their employees as a way of improving their skills, and this arrangement has contributed positively to the profession. The most popular courses include ethics and human rights, but the most needed courses, the panelists believe, are investigative and specialized reporting, and safety for journalists.

Some NGOs have helped journalists' association to organize specialized training for their members, however these have been very few and with little impact.

Newsprint and printing facilities are in private hands, and are operated as profit-making businesses. The panelists agreed that even printing facilities owned by the government provide services to private media without any restrictions. The only serious obstacles are the high taxes on newsprint and the VAT on advertising, which is a big burden to the media.

Media distribution channels are also in private hands and managed efficiently, but transmitters are regulated by the government through the Uganda Communications Commission. They can be switched off any time in case of any disagreements between the state and a given media house.

The panelists agreed that most television stations have now acquired their own transmitters, which has given them a bit of independence.

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There have been some improvements in ICT infrastructure, although the country still has a long way to go. The government set up a fully-fledged ICT ministry to handle all ICT challenges. The government has also established Internet facilities in many urban centers and schools. The main limitation to easy access to such facilities is the distribution of electricity, which is still poor in rural areas.

It is now possible for the media to send SMS news alerts, both audio and video, to mobile phones, while others can access it through the Internet. A number of mobile phone users can easily access Internet on their sets at no cost, while others at reasonable cost. Mobile phones are cheaply sold in all the parts of the country, with the cheapest going for about \$10.

## List of Panel Participants

**Mercy Nalugo**, senior reporter, *The Daily Monitor*, Kampala

**Ahmed Kateregga**, political editor, *Bukedde News*, Kampala

**Saulo Wokulira Ssebagala Jr.**, program coordinator, Human Rights Network for Journalists, Kampala

**Julian Amutuhairwe**, news editor, KFM Radio station/Nation Media Group, Kampala

**Rose Kigongo**, correspondent, Bukedde FM, Masaka

**Barbra Nakazinga**, lecturer, Kampala University, Gaba Town

**Stephen Ouma**, general secretary, Uganda Journalists' Union, Kampala

**Jane Nakyondwa**, news editor, Mama FM community radio station, Kisasi Town

**Expedito Ssebayigga**, researcher, Africa Leadership Institute, Jinja

**Henry Ssekanjako**, reporter, *New Vision*, Kampala

**Kigongo Ssebalamu**, blogger, freelance journalist, Entebbe

**Richard Byenkya**, senior reporter, NBS TV, Mukono

## Moderator and Author

**Muwanga Kakooza**, senior political reporter, Vision Media Group, Kampala

## Coordinator

**Herbert Mukasa Lumansi**, vice president, Uganda Journalists Association, Kampala