



#UgandaSocialMedia

# SOCIAL MEDIA CONFERENCE

How Social Media is  
transforming Uganda's  
political and social  
landscape

## THE 2016 UGANDA SOCIAL MEDIA CONFERENCE REPORT

Serena Conference Centre, Kampala  
July 19, 2016

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Konrad  
Adenauer  
Stiftung





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## Foreword

On the 19th July 2016, the Uganda and South Sudan Programme of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung put up what will go in Uganda's political conference history as one of the best and the biggest both in content, organization and target group. The second annual Social Media Conference discussed how the new media is transforming the Ugandan political and social landscape.

Like never before in our history, we brought together an exciting mix of 30+ panelists and 5 chairs and moderators collected from a wide spectrum of both the social, political, economic and civic space. This report is a summary what emanated from the conference. From Daniel Kalinaki's insightful key note address to Nicholas Opiyo's critical perspectives, you will find in this report some of the opinions and ideas of Uganda's finest social media influencers and community activists. You will read not only government perspectives on why they shut down social media during the 2016 General Elections but you will also find policy recommendations on how best to embrace the social media platform. The proceedings from the various break-away panels chaired by Joy Doreen Biira, Donnas Ojok, Rebecca Rwakabukoza and Gawayya Tegulle will enlighten you further on the juxtaposition between social media, traditional media, culture/art, gender and local governance.

I therefore implore you to flip through the pages of this report from the first to the last and I will be happy to receive your feedback and ideas on how best we can organize the 2017 Conference and others yet to come.

I wish you the very best as you read this report.

*Mathias Kamp*

KAS Country Representative

@KasUganda.

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## Daniel Kalinaki

Daniel Kalinaki is Managing Editor for Regional Projects and Convergence at the Nation Media Group in Nairobi and was previously editor of the Daily Monitor in Uganda, where he maintains a weekly column. His work has appeared in print, online, in video and on radio in several respected outlets across the world, and he sits on the board of the African Centre for Media Excellence. His book, *Kizza Besigye and Uganda's Unfinished Revolution (Dominant Seven)* was published in Kampala in December 2014. He tweets @kalinaki



## Violet Nantume

Violet is a graduate of the Margaret Trowell School of Industrial and Fine Arts, Makerere University. She has been an art manager in Kampala for the past 3 years. Nantume was an Assistant Art Department Coordinator at the recently concluded Queen of Katwe Film Production, a Disney Walt Production. Together with Moses Serubiri and Peter Genza, Nantume is currently co-curating *Eroticism and Intimacy: Faces, Places and Paths* an exhibition project opening on 8th March till 9th April 2016.



## Maureen Akena

Maureen Akena is an ICT4D consultant working with the Agriculture Global Practice Unit of the World Bank currently based in Uganda. Her work focuses on activities that contribute to the transformation of the agricultural sector and youth engagement in agriculture through technology. Prior to this, she worked as an online communications consultant in the World Bank's Kenya country office affiliated to Africa Region Communications team where, among other things; she helped with marketing the social networking tools, blogging, research and conceptualization of content. Maureen holds an Msc in Information Systems from partly Uganda Martyrs University and St. Mary's University, Halifax Nova Scotia, and is currently completing an MA in Development Communication from Daystar University, Nairobi.



## Eshban Kwesiga

Eshban Kwesiga is the Head of Programmes at Parliament Watch Uganda; an organization that monitors and reports on the Parliament of Uganda while using social media, emerging communication and technology tools to bridge the gap between Parliament and the people as well as to make policy information more consumable for mainstream audiences.



## Kyomuhendo A. Ateenyi

Kyomuhendo A. Ateenyi is a Ugandan literary and cultural activist and entrepreneur. He is the co-founder and Director of the Centre for African Cultural Excellence, a Pan-African Literary Initiative that seeks to harness the abilities and talents of African writers and artists in using culturally-grounded narratives to cause change in the societies in which they live through the promotion and advocacy of cultural rights, heritage preservation and the advancement of cultural expressive forms. This year, he is curating the Annual Writivism Festival to be held in Kampala from August 22nd to August, 28th, 2016 at the Uganda National Museum, Kampala.



## Harriet Anena

Harriet Anena is a journalist, researcher and creative writer. She is the Online Content Producer at the African Centre for media Excellence. Before joining ACME in 2014, Anena worked at the Daily Monitor for five years as a reporter and Deputy Chief Sub-Editor. Anena is a graduate of Makerere University where she pursued Bachelors and Masters degrees in Mass Communication and Human Rights, respectively. She has carried out research for various organizations and individuals in the area of media and communications as well as conflict and resettlement of displaced persons of northern Uganda. Her latest research explored the relationship between social media use and freedom of expression in Uganda, with a focus on Facebook. Anena is the author of *A Nation In Labour*, a poetry collection.



## Dr. Sarah Ssali

Sarah Ssali, is currently a Senior Lecturer in Gender Studies, Makerere University, where she mainly lectures Gender, Politics and the State, Gender and Public Policy, Institutions and Social Transformation and Research Methods. Sarah holds a PhD in International Health and Development, Masters in Gender Studies and a Bachelors Degree in Social Science (Political Science and Public Administration). She has experience researching social sciences dimensions of health, gender, identities, minorities and institutions and social transformation and how public policy informs and is informed by them. As a Social Scientist, she has vast experience in ethnographic research methods, with a particularly interest in studying hidden behaviours and non hetero-normative sexual behaviours and aspects of minorities in society.



## Solomon Serwanjja

Solomon Serwanjja practicing broadcast journalist currently working with NBS Television as an Anchor and Investigative reporter. I also double as a Ugandan Correspondent for KTN, a station based in Nairobi Kenya. Previously I worked as a News Reporter and Anchor with NTV Uganda and with UBC TV. I have been practicing journalism for 7 years now but with a bias in reporting on political issues, human rights, and good governance. I have won several awards including the Broadcast Journalist for the year ACME Award for 2014, 2015. Away from the cameras, I am also a teaching assistant with Makerere University, where I teach broadcast journalism.



## Godiva Akullo

Godiva Akullo is a feminist lawyer and activist with a Bachelor's degree in Law from Makerere University, a Masters in Law from Harvard Law School and a Diploma in Legal Practice from the Law Development Centre. She is a lecturer on law and a legal consultant. Her feminist ideals are infused in the thoughts that she shares on social media about the position of womyn in society, politics/ democracy and other social issues. She is also quite invested in finding the perfect meme for every emotion she has. She can be contacted at [amgodiva@gmail.com](mailto:amgodiva@gmail.com) and [@amgodiva](https://twitter.com/amgodiva) on Twitter



## Gerald Bareebe

Gerald Bareebe is a Trudeau Scholar and PhD Candidate in the Department of political science, University of Toronto, Canada. Before starting his doctoral studies, Gerald was a national political reporter at the Daily Monitor. He covered the 2011 presidential election, closely following FDC's Kizza Besigye and NRM's Yoweri Museveni, and also has covered parliament and city politics.



## Giles Muhame

Giles Muhame holds Bachelor's Degree in Journalism and Mass Communication from Makerere University. He founded Chimpreports in 2010 an online news site. Starting with a borrowed laptop and without capital, I managed to turn around a little known website into a prominent source of news in not only Uganda and Rwanda but also the Great Lakes region.

The site focuses on politics, business, arts, sports, regional security, human rights and extractives. As an investigative journalist, he has covered politics mainly Uganda and Rwanda and other parts of the Great Lakes region.



## Bahati Remmy

Bahati Remmy is a journalist currently working with NBS TV and a producer of Barometer, a political talk show. She is at the forefront of fighting for the rights of journalists in Uganda and her arrest and intimidation by police live on camera sparked wider conversation about press freedom early this year. She coverage of political issues has won her several awards with the most recent one being the Zimeo African Award. Besides Politics, she has published stories on the safety of journalists, agriculture and human rights. She holds a Bachelors degree in Journalism and Mass Communication from Ndejje University and a certificate in ICT from AFRALTI Nairobi, Kenya.



## Rosebell Kagumire

Rosebell Kagumire is a multi media content producer, communications specialist, trainer, public speaker and award-winning blogger. She has worked in the Ugandan media covering political and social justice issues at Daily Monitor, NTV Uganda and Uganda Radio Network. She is also an analyst for various international media. Rosebell has over 10 years experience at the intersection between media and rights in crisis, women's rights, peace and security. She has experience in emergencies communications and worked as a Social Media Manager at the International Organization for Migration (IOM) running international migrants rights campaigns and guiding humanitarian communications covering various conflicts. The World Economic Forum recognized her among the Young Global Leaders under 40 in 2013. Rosebell hold a Masters in Media, Peace and Conflict Studies from the United Nations mandated University for Peace in Costa Rica. She has also studied non-violent conflict at the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, Tufts University. She tweets [@Rosebellk](https://twitter.com/Rosebellk)



## Nicholas Opiyo

Nicholas Opiyo, a leading human rights lawyer and founder of the human rights organization Chapter Four Uganda, has worked tirelessly since 2005 to defend civil liberties in Uganda, often for free and on behalf of society's most vulnerable and marginalized. He also serves on a panel of experts for the UN Special Rapporteurs for the Right to Freedom of Assembly and Association and the UN Special Rapporteur for Extra-judicial, Summary or Arbitrary Executions. Nicholas was a Distinguished Summer Fellow at the Centre for African Studies, Stanford University in 2015 and he is currently a UCSF Visiting Scholar.



## Moses Owiny

Moses Owiny works with the Ugandan NGO Women of Uganda Network (WOUGNET) in empowering women and girls in Uganda to use information and communication technology tools to address sustainable development issues. He is the Program Manager for Information Sharing and Networking. His most recent work regarding women in the online space includes the Universal Periodic Review document entitled "Women's Rights and the internet in Uganda" co-authored with CIPESA and the Association for Progressive Communications (APC).



## Ruth Aine

Ruth Aine Tindyebwa is blogger and online communications specialist based in Kampala, Uganda. She was the first East and Southern African recipient of the Heinz Kuhn Stiftung Journalism Award 2011 in over 13 years and has trained with media houses like Deutsche Welle in Bonn, Germany. She is also the United Nations Social Good Connector for Uganda - a champion of young people that are using tech and social media for good. She has experience being a part of and working with youth networks: around the African continent. She is a Futurist: part of the South Africa Node & East Africa Node. Ruth has mentored and trained young people about the use of Social Media in over 14 African Countries under the African Union Department of Political Affairs and Youth Hub Africa. She is currently a lead editor at Africa Blogging a platform that brings together young political and society issue bloggers in the African Sub-Saharan Region. She also currently works with Center for Policy Analysis Uganda which is the home of Parliament Watch.





### Joy Doreen Biira

Joy Doreen Biira is a Ugandan broadcast Journalist currently working with Kenya Television Network (KTN) headquartered in Kenya's Capital, Nairobi. Biira is one of KTN's most recognizable faces as an all-round talented broadcaster also known as a global anchor with vast knowledge on current affairs across East Africa, the African Continent and beyond.

Biira has produced content for and hosted a pan African show "Africa Speaks" whose main objective was to grow intra-African relationships economically, politically and socially. A show that integrates social media platforms is sourcing views from around the continent. Some of the content from moderation events has been aired on this show to share the insights with the rest of Africa. Biira's versatility and flexibility to report on Africa's current affairs (political, social, economic and cultural) has groomed her into an informed anchor, moderator, speaker, media trainer and now communications advisor on issue based events across Africa. Biira is show host of "Business Today", a one hour show that airs across 12 countries on the continent.



### Gawayya Tegulle

Gawayya Tegulle is a journalist, advocate and public policy specialist. In the media he has at various times, since 1995 been a political reporter and editor in The People, The Daily Monitor and The New Vision. He has also been a talkshow host on Impact FM, Radio One, NTV, WBS TV and UBC TV. He is currently the Managing Partner in Tegulle Gawayya & Co. Advocates.



### Catherine Byaruhanga

Catherine Byaruhanga is the BBC Correspondent in Uganda. Over the past three years she's covered stories such as the M23 rebellion just across the border in the DRC, Uganda's Ebola outbreaks and the recent disputed Presidential elections. Prior to her posting to Uganda Catherine worked on various programmes at the BBC World Service including Focus on Africa, Business Daily and World Business Report. Some of the countries she's reported from include South Africa, Kenya, Rwanda, Nigeria and Ivory Coast.



### Donnas Ojok

Donnas is a Programme Officer at Konrad-Adenauer-Adenauer-Stiftung. He is a YALI RLC Fellow and an alumnus of LSE where he was a PfAL scholar. Before coming to KAS, Donnas worked at the frontlines of development interventions in Northern Uganda with VEDCO and War Child UK as an M&E and Business Development specialist respectively. Besides practicing and theorizing development, Donnas has special interests in creative arts and has recorded songs, spoken words and performed in Kampala, London and Nairobi. He tweets at @OjokD and blogs at [www.donnasojok.com](http://www.donnasojok.com)



### Mathias Kamp

Mathias Kamp is a political scientist with specialisation in the areas of development cooperation and democratisation, and a regional focus on Sub-Saharan Africa. He currently heads the country office of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS) for Uganda and South Sudan, based in Kampala. Prior to that, he worked as Representative of Misereor, the German Catholic Development Agency, in Nigeria. Mr. Kamp has several years of field experience in development cooperation in East and West Africa and has done extensive research and consultancy work on topics related to democratic transition, democracy promotion and civic education. He holds a B.A. in Public Administration from the Westfälische Wilhelms-Universität Münster, a B.Sc. in European Studies from the University of Twente (NL), and a Masters degree in International Relations and Development Policy from the Universität Duisburg-Essen.



### Rebecca Rwakabukoza

Rebecca Rwakabukoza is a freelance journalist and blogger whose writing focuses primarily on the Ugandan woman. She runs Mon pi Mon, a blog that is "an online space where we question, appreciate, dissect, and share issues that affect them."



### Patrick Kayemba

Patrick is the Chairperson LC5 of Iganga District Local Government. Before joining active politics, he was championing civic society movements in Eastern Uganda. Patrick worked at First African Bicycles Information Organization (FABIO) as the Executive Director.



### Prossy Kawala

Prossy is a media and community solutions professional with profound knowledge and skills in developing and promoting meaningful initiatives for community transformation and development. She co-founded the Center for Media Literacy and Community Development - CEMCOD, a Uganda-based non-profit organization transforming communities through the promotion of both media and community led initiatives. As CEMCOD's Director of Media Initiatives, Prossy's specialty is in Media and Information Literacy, designing media & training packages that help young people, women, and communities at large in influencing their own development agendas through media and strengthening community voices in decision making processes.



## Julius Mucunguzi

Julius is a communications and public affairs professional with over 10 years deep, wide and vast experience in managing complex assignments for international political, diplomatic, non-governmental and business organizations in Africa, Asia, Caribbean, Pacific and North America. He is currently the communications advisor to the Prime Minister of Uganda. Before coming to the OPM, Julius was an Assistant Spokesperson and Communications Officer at the Commonwealth Secretariat where he provided strategic communications advice and support to senior management to raise the profile of the work of the 54-member country organization. Before joining the Commonwealth, Julius managed Communications for World Vision and taught journalism and public relations at Makerere University. He started his career as a reporter with the Monitor newspaper in Uganda while I was still a journalism student at Makerere University. He also holds an MPhil from the University of Oslo.



## Patience Akumu

Patience Akumu is a lawyer and award-winning journalist who has used to social media to advocate for the rights of women and sexual minorities. She has written about human rights and social justice issues for publications like the Guardian and Observer UK, The Observer Uganda, New Internationalist, African Business, Journ Africa and Africa in Fact.



## Ludigo Andrew Salema

Salema is a Ugandan Visual artist, actor, storyteller, educator, writer and entrepreneur. He refers to himself as a social activist that takes a lot of pride in lessons learned from different cultures. He is mainly a printmaker that works with wood and oil based inks. Ludigo was born in Kampala on the 5th of March 1981 and has five siblings two brothers and three sisters. His experience as an artist and social activist has seen him travel to Hong Kong and Australia as an artist in residence and exhibitor. He is a 2015 Mandela Washington Fellow and completed six weeks at Dartmouth College in intensive business and entrepreneurship leadership track. His company Ludigo Creations (u) LTD has existed since 2010 and acts as a platform of expression for young people in Kampala Uganda. His vision is to impact the next generation of creative's turning them into community change makers through innovation.



## Lindsey Kukunda

Lindsey Kukunda is a freelance media practitioner, human rights activist and feminist who founded Not Your Body - an initiative meant to expose and challenge gender-based abuse.



## Edward Sekyewa

Edward Ronald Sekyewa is a journalist and Executive Director of Hub for Investigative Media (HIM). Among other things, HIM advocates for the full implementation of the Access to Information law and trains journalists in digital safety.



## Peter Kauju

Peter has over 10 years of experience in Media Relations and Public Relations Management with extensive skills in planning and executing communication strategies. He is a member of the Public Relations Association of Uganda and an Alumnus of Ecole National College (ENA) Paris, France with a qualification in Communication and Diplomacy. He currently serves as the Head of Public & Corporate Affairs at Kampala Capital City Authority where he guides and advises Senior Management on matters of communication in addition to executing the communication function of KCCA.



## Henry Nickson Ogwal

Fending for himself as an orphan made Henry Nickson Ogwal start early in life to pay attention to both small and big things that affect lives and rights of individuals and society. Wide social and professional exposure has augmented his deeper appreciation different socio-political and economic realities that affect social groups and communities differently in Africa and the world. Married with two children, Henry is an economist by profession. The contribution he makes to attainment of social justice and dignity for all draws from a strong family and community based community education from which he benefited. Henry has effectively worked in the development sector in Uganda for over 20 years as a leadership and development consultant, an activist for child and women rights, and a facilitator of social change. He is currently Fundraising Director at ActionAid Uganda.



08:00 am  
Registration, Welcome Tea & Bites

09:00 am  
**Welcome Remarks** by **Mathias Kamp**,  
KAS Country Representative @KasUganda

09:10 am  
**Opening Remarks** by **Hon. Frank Tumwebaze**,  
Minister of Information, ICT and Communication  
@FrankTumwebazek

09:25 am  
**Keynote Address** by **Daniel Kalinaki**,  
Managing Editor, Nation Media Group, Nairobi @Kalinaki

09:45 am  
**Opening Panel: Social Media redefining democratic  
space in Uganda: Building bridges or building walls?**

**Panelists:**

- **Nicholas Opiyo**, Executive Director, Chapter Four Uganda @nickopiyo
- **Rosebell Kagumire**, Chief Executive, Kweeta Consulting @rosebellk
- **Patience Akumu**, Policy and Research Coordinator, Oxfam Uganda @patienceakumu

**MODERATOR: Solomon Serwanjja**, News Anchor and Reporter, NBS @solomonserwanjj

11:00 am  
**Breakaway Sessions**

**Panel 1: Women and social media in Uganda:  
breaking barriers - but at what cost?**

**Panelists:**

- **Henry Nickson Ogwal**, Fundraising Director, Action Aid Uganda @nicksonogwal
- **Godiva Akullo**, Feminist lawyer @amgodiva
- **Dr. Sarah Ssali**, Makerere School of Gender and Women Studies @sssalie
- **Lindsey Kukunda**, Blogger and Freelance Writer @RizaLouise
- **Moses Owiny**, Programme Manager, Women of Uganda Network @mosesowiny

**CHAIR: Rebecca Rwakabukoza**, Blogger @rwakabukoza

**Panel 2: Contemporary culture and social media:  
Big opportunities - tough questions**

**Panelists:**

- **Violet Nantume**, Artist & curator of eroticism and intimacy exhibition @NntmViolet
- **Harriet Anena**, Author of a Nation in Labor @ahpetite
- **Kyomuhendo Ateenyi**, Arts Curator and Co-Founder, CACE @Omusambu
- **Andrew Salema Ludigo**, Visual Artist and 2015 YALI Mandela Washington Fellow @ludigocreations

**CHAIR: Donnas Ojok**, Programme Officer, KAS @OjokD

12:30 pm  
Lunch Break

01:30 pm  
**Breakaway Sessions**

**Panel 3: Traditional media in the age of social  
media: challenges and opportunities for a  
Ugandan journalist today**

**Panelists:**

- **Catherine Byaruhanga**, BBC Uganda Correspondent @cathkemi
- **Remmy Bahati**, News Reporter, NBS @BahatiRemmy
- **Gerald Bareebe**, PhD Candidate, University of Toronto @GeraldBareebe
- **Giles Muhame**, Managing Editor, Chimp Reports @Gilespies
- **Edward Sekyewa**, Executive Director, Hub for Investigative Media @SekyewaER

**CHAIR: Joy Doreen Biira**, Journalist and News Anchor, KTN @JoyDoreenBiira

**Panel 4: Advancing good governance and service  
delivery through social media**

**Panelists:**

- **Patrick Kayemba**, Iganga District LC5 Chairman @1kayembpatrick
- **Eshban Kwesiga**, Programme Manager, Parliament Watch @EshbankWesiga
- **Maureen Agena**, ICT4D Consultant @maureenagena
- **Prossy Kawala**, Journalist & Media Literacy Advocate, CEMCOD @ProssyKawala
- **Peter Kaujju**, Spokesperson, KCCA, @PeterKaujju

**CHAIR: Gawayata Tegulle**, Media Consultant @gawayategulle

03:00 pm **Closing Panel & Plenary Discussion:  
Challenges and Opportunities of Social Media -  
Where are we heading?**

**Panelists:**

- **Ruth Aine**, Blogger @RuthAine
- **Daniel Kalinaki**, Managing Editor, Nation Media Group @Kalinaki
- **Donnas Ojok**, Programme Officer, KAS @OjokD
- **Julius Mucunguzi**, Communications Advisor, Office of the Prime Minister @j\_mucunguzi

**MODERATOR: Joy Doreen Biira**, Journalist and News Anchor, KTN @JoyDoreenBiira

04:45 pm **Final Remarks**

05:00 pm **Tea, Networking and Departure**



## Introduction and background

In July 2015, KAS-Ugandan country office organized the first ever platform to harness social media opportunities for political communication in Uganda. The 2015 Social Media Conference brought together a host of experts and professionals from the civil society, media practitioners and scholars, political activists, and government officials to assess the impact of social media on political communication and civic engagement.

In order to provide further opportunities for a systematic reflection on crucial issues related to social media with key experts and stakeholders, KAS hosted the second annual Social Media Conference on 19th July 2016. The theme for this year's conference was *"How is social media transforming Uganda's political and social landscape?"*

The conference brought together key stakeholders from academia, government, civil society and the media to have a constructive exchange on the opportunities and challenges of the growing social media sphere and to assess how it is shaping the political and social landscape.

Over 250 participants attended the conference at Serena Hotel in Kampala. The conference started with welcome remarks by KAS country representative Mathias Kamp and the day's moderator Solomon Serwanjja who put the topic into perspective. A keynote address by Mr. Daniel Kalinaki of the Nation Media Group offered context to the topic, and set the ground for riveting debates through the day. A high-level panel comprised of social media influencers, activists and media practitioners set the stage for parallel sessions staffed with a diverse group of panelists, on topics which included;

1. Women and social media in Uganda
2. Traditional media in the age of social media
3. Contemporary culture and social media
4. Good governance and service delivery

Two parallel sessions each ran during the morning and afternoon breakaway sessions after which a closing panel wrapped up the day with perspectives from the four breakaway sessions and provided an outlook focusing on the way forward on leveraging the opportunities and challenges of social media in Uganda.





## Opening and Welcome Remarks

NBS's Solomon Serwanjja opened the event by emphasising how important social media has become in the social, political and economic landscape of Uganda, with 14million internet users out of whom 7.4million are subscribed to mobile internet according to the Uganda Communications Commission<sup>1</sup>. Social media, Mr Serwanjja noted, has become an integral part of our lives. Millions and hundreds of thousands of Ugandans are signed up on Facebook and Twitter respectively. Millions of others use WhatsApp and other mobile platforms. This scenario, he said, brings lots of opportunities as well as challenges.

The questions underpinning the thematic focus of the 2016 Social Media Conference, he reminded delegates, were;

- Has social media increased democratic space? or
- Is it leading to closing of the democratic space?

Citing latest political events at national and international level, Mr. Serwanjja emphasized that the power of social media should not be underestimated. The attempted coup in Turkey that surprised many for example, he argued, was in part thwarted by President Erdogan rallying his supporters by recording his message with an iPhone that was then streamed to millions of Turkish citizens who then poured on the streets to confront the coup plotters. The irony of the act was that the Turkish government under Erdogan had been cracking down on social media and traditional media for long. This, he said, showed how social media is needed by all players on both sides of the political discourse. He also referred to the two times in the space of 6 months, that the Ugandan government shut down social media during and after the 2016 presidential elections, at which point he wondered whether Ugandans should allow to be subjected to the whims of the government on when and how to use social media. Mr. Serwanjja further wondered why telecom companies and other internet service providers easily collaborate with the government without considering the rights and wishes of their clients.

He however also posed a question on whether users also have some responsibility in ensuring that they 'Use Social Media the Right Way' and whether users are misusing this right.

With that, he invited Mr. Mathias Kamp, the KAS Uganda-South Sudan Country Director to welcome the delegates and kick off the day's deliberations. Welcome Remarks by Mr. Mathias Kamp, KAS Country Director



<sup>1</sup>The Internet World Statistics puts internet users in Uganda at 1.5million and the International Telecom Union and others give figures much lower than UCC's. The issue is with the methodology and other nuances surrounding the UCC figure.



## Welcome Remarks by Mr. Mathias Kamp, KAS Country Director

Mr. Kamp began by welcoming all the assembled delegates, making special mention of some of the panelists in the audience that had travelled from far to attend the event. Reflecting on the 2015 Social Media Conference, he explained why KAS was doing this again and why the event was becoming an annual affair. The demand and discussions from last year convinced KAS of the relevance and importance of the topic and revealed the need for further discussions. He sought to explain how the KAS-organized Social Media Conference differs from numerous social media conferences held in Kampala:

“There are many conferences on social media in Kampala, but most of them are discussing how people can leverage social media for business and trade. We realised that there is a big gap because all the talk is how to use social media to enhance product branding, marketing, apply and use new and latest gadgets, etc. There was less on a social and political dimension of social media. How it affects our society, politics, governance, etc. That’s what we wanted to uncover.”

Drawing on the experience of the previous KAS-organized Social Media Conference, he explained how, from the rich perspectives of people in the media, civil society, media, etc, that graced that conference KAS and other stakeholders were able to begin a discussion on how social media facilitated civic engagement.

*“From that learning we published a document on the role of social media in political communication in our ‘Reality check’ publication series. This year, as much as we are deepening what we talked about last year, we are adding new discussion components such as social media’s impact on traditional media; government services, etc.”*

He also added that among the panel KAS included two new topics which are the gender-related discussion and the cultural perspective.

Mr Kamp then invited the day’s keynoter, Mr. Daniel Kalinaki.

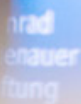






# SOCIAL MEDIA CONFERENCE

How Social Media is transforming Uganda's political and social landscape







## Keynote Address by Daniel Kalinaki

Mr. Kalinaki began his keynote by emphasizing that social media is an emerging phenomenon and that it is important to determine how to harness it. He stated that social media is facilitating engagement but that to fully understand its potential, one needs to localize it to the reality of the Ugandan society.

He explained that in the past, most social and political movements against dictatorships thrived in the absence of social media.

He however added that a combination of ICT advances and the birth of social media has revolutionised this traditional way of revolting. He attributed the digital revolution of social media and online activism to Barack Obama's tech-savvy 2008 U.S presidential campaign and gave the examples of the Arab Spring, and, locally, the walk to work protests and the 2009 Buganda riots as events fuelled by media (social and traditional respectively) but whose underlying causes had existed for years before. He added that *"We can't understand the role of media in collective action without understanding underlying political environment."*

Mr Kalinaki argued that the blowback from the growth of social media wrought by online communications liberalization would include government putting in place interventions repressing access guised as enhancing access. He called this clamping down on social media the negative correlation in intensity of social media. It has put the government on the defensive.

Mr Kalinaki however also described the negative implications of social media such as;

- Eating up employee's time. Negative impact on society and power relations.
- Impact on social relations: *"We don't look at each anymore, there is Whatsapp, Instagram for that,"* he deadpanned.
- Negative impact on society and power relations.
- Distortion of reality in social media. *"This is the reason for example that the top ten social media accounts in Uganda include those belonging to traditional media houses,"* because, he said, people still mostly rely on them for truth or to validate what they read on social media.
- Social media campaigns are good (such as 40 days 40 Smiles by Esther Kalenzi, #SaveCarol, etc). But there should be more questions and accountability asked of duty bearers instead of riding on emotions to help people, a move that is neither sustainable nor adequate. These feel good campaigns may make people forget real activism, which is that of asking for accountability. *"Fundraising is good but can blind us to injustice and inaction by the government,"* he stated.

*"...the best response to the pathetic state of our hospitals for example, is not to fundraise for the sick patients but to demand for a national health insurance scheme that works for us all,"* he said.

Mr. Kalinaki argued that offline engagement is as important if not more important than online engagement. *"The real struggle must take place in the real world. Actually social media can undercut that,"* he argued.

He implored attendees to start asking hard questions *"that annoy those in power such as why the taxes you pay go to buying luxury cars for ministers and MPs instead of building and equipping hospitals and giving school children a good education."*



## Below is Kalinaki's address in full

*Good morning,*

*It is a pleasant surprise to be able to speak with you this morning. A pleasure, because I see many people in the room that I know and some that I even like – and a surprise, because I have no idea what I am supposed to talk about!*

*In the absence of any deep intellectual insights, here is how I plan to occupy the time allocated to me: First, I will outline a theoretical framework with which I would like to discuss today's topic. Then I will localise it by applying its core arguments to the reality of Ugandan society and the political landscape.*

*But first we must define the scope of what we understand to be social media and what distinguishes it from, for instance, traditional or mainstream media, and why we think it worthy of an important conference such as this one. My dictionary defines social media as "websites and applications that enable users to create and share content or to participate in social networking".*

*Mostly, I would add, tools such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Whatsapp, Snapchat and so on, are spaces in which network effects are formed, bringing together producers and consumers of information and often*

*blurring the lines in a constant feedback loop. They are at once, building blocks of a new relational dynamic, and sledgehammers for dismantling established power structures around the flow and dissemination of information and the accruing power thereof as seen in traditional media.*

*It is important to clarify, right from the onset, that the term "social media" is not synonymous with social movements or the process of social networking for that matter. Whether it is in feudal Russia or revolutionary France or even in our own Uganda during the days of Idi Amin and Obote II, people faced with sufficient levels of widespread corruption, impunity and repression have, even with the most rudimentary forms of communication, been able to mobilise action to change their circumstances, often by revolutionary or at least radical means.*

*While these tools and movements have been around for many years, the social media phenomenon has been pushed towards terminal velocity by a combination of technological advances and increased access, coupled with the newly found 'mobilization' capacities of these network effects.*



*Falling costs of smartphones and data have increased reach and access but it was the Barack Obama presidential campaigns in 2008 and the events of the Arab Spring that followed, starting in 2010, that first demonstrated the potency of social media.*

*In only a few years, thus, social media host the world's conversations, give blow-by-blow accounts of events as they happen, and have disrupted not just traditional media business and operational models, but also the way citizens engage with one another and with those that govern them. That is the area that, I believe, interests us most and informs the theme of this conference. Therefore, while I know a thing or two about the disruptive nature of social media to the media landscape generally, I would like to focus more on their wider impact on society and, in particular, their ability to mobilise action against the status quo.*

*The conventional wisdom is that social media have made it easier for millions of people connected through these networks to mobilize for (and ostensibly lead to) collective action. From Kamuli to Casablanca, Bamako to Bolivia, we can at once all proclaim that #BlackLivesMatter or transform into #JeSuisCharlie or simply try to #SaveCarol, something I shall return to. Others, however, argue that the role of these technological changes in the success of transformational movements has been greatly exaggerated. Before we seek to examine local examples, it is necessary to refer to some of the scholarship that has gone into this subject. In particular, scholarship that seeks to understand the Arab Spring and examine the relationship between Mohamed Bouazizi, the humble market vendor, his desperate self-immolation, and the subsequent uprisings that swept from power entrenched regimes in Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya and changed the Arab world in fundamental ways.*

*In their study on social media and the Arab Spring, three scholars led by Gadi Wolfsfeld provided a theoretical framework that is instructive, and which I will rely on. Their first premise is that "we cannot understand the role of social media in collective action without first*

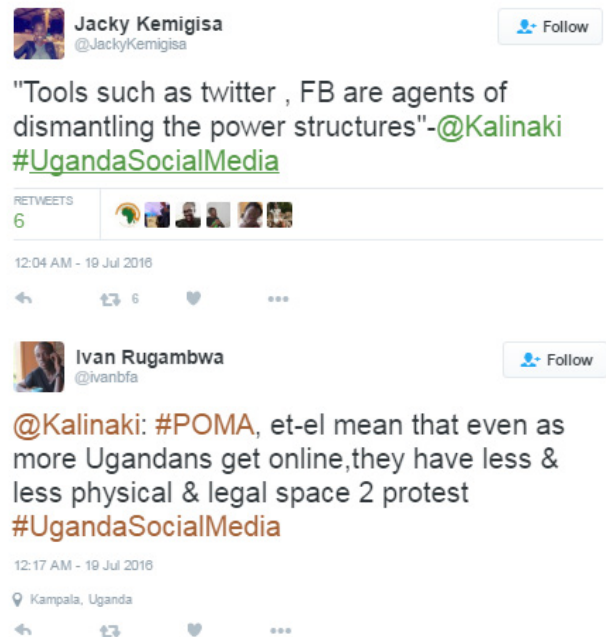
*taking into account the political environment within which they operate". The second premise is that "a significant increase in the use of new media is much more likely to follow a significant amount of protest activity than to precede it".*

*Now let us try to localize this frameworks to our reality in Uganda and I propose to test them against three major forms of popular protest: the September 2009 Kayunga or Buganda Riots; the Walk to Work protests in 2011; and the popular actions around and after the 2016 elections.*

*But first, a disclaimer: social media are still relatively new in Uganda (as we make our slow, tentative progress to middle income status) and there is insufficient data or scholarship on which to build concrete arguments. For instance, although Twitter, seen as one of the key mobilisational tools, has been around since March 2006, by the time of the Kayunga Riots it was a rather new medium in Uganda and not a key player. I had to check last night for when I joined it and was rather relieved to know it was a few months before the riots.*

*Yet this allows us to use the Kayunga Riots as a control measure in this social experiment, as we examine the cause-and-effect relationship between popular protests and the media. Those riots had been preceded by many months of growing tensions between the Central Government and the Buganda Government. The bitter taste of the controversial 2006 general elections and the lifting of the presidential term limits that preceded it were still fresh in the memory.*

*There was a clear build up to the events that would follow; the animated rhetoric on all sides and the emergence, overnight, of modern-day kings and princes laying claim to ancient lands and grievances. Yet when violence erupted it was spontaneous and spread out in a manner that remains instructive; reports of protests and violence were reported by primarily traditional media, in particular local-language radios, including CBS radio, fanning new protests and violence in other areas. It remains debatable whether the media fanned the flames, but they certainly did not light the match.*



Similarly, the political environment in Uganda in the post-2011 election was ripe for protest. Apart from the disaffection some felt with the election outcome, the ruins of the Kasubi Tombs still smoldering in the minds of others and the rising cost of living triggered by electoral financing activities, created fertile ground for grievances, culminating into the 'Walk to Work' protests.

So here we have two protests: the first one spontaneous but not entirely unexpected, the second one with a more formal organisation, but also fuelled, at least initially, by reports of protests feeding through the media to give birth to more protests. It is possible that greater access to social media could have intensified both protests but even without media the political environment was ripe for protest.

One would then be entitled to ask at this point why we have not seen an escalation of protests since Walk to Work, despite growing access to social media tools and the internet? What conditions present in 2009 and 2011 allowed for protests changed in 2016 and ensured relatively low-key protests, even with greater access to social media?

Here, again, the political landscape is illustrative. Jolted by the intensity of the Kayunga Riots as well as the Arab Spring, the authorities in Uganda had taken pre-emptive steps. Passed in August 2013, the Public Order Management Bill had restored wide-ranging powers to the police to control law and order that,

critics argue, gave legal cover to undue restrictions to the constitutional freedom of expression, association and political assembly.

The government had also literally closed the physical space for protests by sealing off the Constitutional Square as well as the Ceremonial Grounds in Kampala (which remain under 24-hour armed guard at the time of writing). This tactic had precedents in the Arab world in the wake of the protests there; in Egypt the generals who rolled back the revolution that ousted Hosni Mubarak ringed Tahrir Square with iron grating. In Bahrain King Hamad dug up the Pearl roundabout that protestors had previously rallied around and erected a traffic light junction instead.

The immediate implication of this is that even as more and more Ugandans get access to social media and the collaborative network effect it offers, they have less and less physical or legal room in which to organize protests and demand for change. The more you know the less you are able to do anything about it, beyond liking, retweeting and tagging.

A quick discourse analysis of selected social media channels and mobilization efforts in Uganda reveals interesting social and political dilemmas. The furor over the broken cancer machine at Mulago Hospital, for instance, or over bad roads, and other daily gripes, shows the inability of institutions to quickly adjust government policies and actions to the demands of the people.





Politically, it reveals evidence of what scholars term the cultural incongruence hypothesis – the gap between the people's desired level of democratic values and the country's actual level of democracy.

Yet the nature of the political environment has created a semblance of the catch-22 that Wolfsfeld et al (2013) describe where the people with the greatest need to mobilize against their governments find it most difficult to exploit the new media. If one were to map the venues of popular protests and overlay them with nodes of social media activity, I suspect that this discrepancy would become very clear.

The protests we see are not only predominantly in urban and peri-urban areas, but also within the lower-income neighbourhoods, far removed, if I might say, from the cappuccino-sipping Twitterati who are more likely to use their internet access for entertainment and to keep in touch with friends.

Needless to say, this cyber impotence is more pronounced when the government chooses to pull the plug on social media whenever it feels threatened by citizen anger and is unable to mobilise sufficient intellectual bandwidth to provide a coherent counter argument. This has happened twice in 2016, and counting.

The second premise – that a significant increase in the use of new media is much more likely to follow a significant amount of protest activity than to precede it – is also evident in the two recent incidents of the government pulling the plug on social media; the response wasn't a march in the streets to demand access, but a surge in downloads of virtual private networks to bypass the blockade.

This suggests that as more and more people take up protests, even civil ones in cyberspace, they will attract more and more people to join social media, not necessarily vice versa. This is an important lesson for those who seek to clampdown on social (and traditional) media; the solution is to address the causes of protest, not to throttle the medium.

But for those interested in using social media to transform society, the message is clear: the authorities

have taken the analogue restrictions on the media into cyberspace. With social media as with traditional media, citizens are playing defense. And those in power have the serve.

Writing about the political power of social media in 2010, Clay Shirky warned of the danger of politicizing the internet, for instance with allegations of activists being funded by faceless foreign enemies, in order for non-democratic regimes to try and block access, thereby undermining the possibility of the internet and social media building an active civil society and forging an alternative path to democratization.

Indeed while the Ugandan government has taken some positive steps towards increasing access and reducing the cost of connectivity, for instance through the Rural Communication Fund, most of its interventions, however, have been in the general direction of controlling access or monitoring those in these social networks, with punitive intent.

Let's pause here for a second to sum up the argument so far. We have seen that the political environment shapes the form and function of social media and any collective action they facilitate. And we have seen that protests move people to social media, rather than social media moving people to protests, and that the objective conditions on the ground, and the response of those in power, then determine whether that fans more protests.

We have seen a negative correlation between the intensity of protests in the last decade and growing access to social media and have hypothesized that this is, at least in part, due to the closing down of physical space, the imposition of legal restrictions on protest, the resolution of some underlying factors, such as the relations between Buganda and the Central government, and the clamping down on social media themselves. In other words, we have seen what transformations social media have NOT done.

## **So what transformations can we see?**

First, as many employers will tell you, social media is the silent thief of corporate time, the crouching tiger



*devouring the attention of employees, the hidden dragon slicing through productivity.*

*Almost 20 years ago while starting out as a journalist, it was easy to see the singles and married couples in the morning traffic. If they were talking to each other, they were dating. If they weren't talking, they were married. These days no one talks to anyone; there's Whatsapp for that! We don't look at each other in the eye; there is Instagram for that.*

*Yet it has also provided opportunities for businesses, both big and small, to be seen, and for them to have conversations with potential customers. Beyond turning us all into socially awkward misfits, social media have had some profound impacts on society and power relations. Social media have democratized the space for citizen engagement and given the governed the opportunity to directly challenge those that govern them. Former Prime Minister Amama Mbabazi was one of the first politicians to take to these unchartered waters with #AskthePM question-and-answer sessions. Regardless of whether one cynically sees it as politicking or not, the idea of an ordinary citizen asking a senior government official direct question in a public forum is fairly revolutionary in Ugandan society.*

*Asking questions does not always get you answers, mind, at least not directly, as my friend Thomas Ddumba recently discovered during URA's #AsktheCG, but it is a start – and an important one.*

*Giving every citizen the power to publish, as social media do, is not without its problems, from violation of privacy to publication of unverified or deliberately distorted information. We used to live in a world where you didn't believe anything until the government denied it; we now live in a world where it is hard to believe anything!*

*In fact, this distortion of reality and the lack of credibility in the vast social media jungle could explain why the leading social media accounts in Uganda remain those associated with traditional media houses, which helps to maintain the dominant narrative that social media are supposed to challenge.*

*We have also seen how social media reduce the transaction costs of mobilising collective action. For instance, my friend Esther Kalenzi runs the 40Days over 40Smiles non-profit, which builds stuff for children in need. It is a fantastic little outfit with great people doing great things, but I am constantly trying to get Esther and her friends (and annoying them in the process) to stop doing the soft, fluffy things that warm the heart and start asking the hard questions that annoy those in power, such as why the taxes we pay go to pay for luxury cars for those in power, such as why the taxes we pay go to pay for luxury cars for ministers and MPs instead of building classrooms and giving school children a warm meal. #OurMoney!*

*To be fair, 40\_40, #SaveCarol and similar initiatives facilitated by social media mobilisation are imperfect responses to an imperfect terrain. While they are altruistic, benevolent and carried out with the best intentions, they are actually symptoms of weak, not strong, citizen agency. We all know that the best response to the pathetic state of Ugandan hospitals, for example, is not to fundraise for the odd patient whose story happens to galvanise public attention, but to demand for a national health insurance scheme that works.*

*Yet social media campaigns allow us to remind ourselves of our humanity, to tithe away our social conscience, to outsource our citizen agency with a dose of mobile money here, a retweet there. Social media are powerful tools for low-cost recruitment and fundraising but they can also be the deceptively soothing balm that blinds us to injustice, making us impotent to impunity.*

*Where is the justice for Abigail, the 2-year-old shot dead by a security operative in Masaka in 2011, or Saidi Lutaaya, whose inquest remains pending almost a decade after his death, despite being ordered by a judge? Or the dozens of Ugandans tortured or subjected to worse by the security agencies supposed to protect them? Where do dead #hashtags go?*



## **Let me now conclude with some broad-brush observations.**

*First, information wants to be free. We have seen this on the global scale with WikiLeaks, the Snowden leaks and most recently, the Panama Papers. The notion of leaking of official documents isn't new in and of itself, as we saw with the Pentagon Papers on the Vietnam War in the United States of America many years ago. However, the nature of some of these leaks, which completely by-pass the mediatory space of traditional media, is revolutionary and will be more so when not if it starts in undemocratic and repressive states.*

*Secondly, several studies have shown that citizens who use the Internet are more likely to demand democratic governance, although overall rates of national internet penetration do not always correlate with more demand for democracy from citizens.*

*Research suggests that, "Internet use may play a more meaningful role in strengthening and enhancing young democracies through impacting citizen attitudes rather than promoting outright democratic transitions among autocratic regimes." Thus social media should be seen as facilitators of protest rather than causes, spaces for enlightenment rather than dark forces for regime change. As more and more people come online in Uganda and other poorer countries with less penetration, more and more people will demand for better governance, rule of law and increased accountability. Brace yourselves, I daresay, to those in charge of controlling the public narrative.*

*Third, social media are not an end in themselves. They only help transform societies when certain conditions are present, including a moderate to high level of internet penetration, some form of at least partially democratic regimes, and a high demand from citizens for deeper democracy. It doesn't matter how many retweets you get if you don't get out and vote!*

*Offline activism is as important, if not more, than online engagement. As we've seen with the Balai Citoyen and Firimbi citizen movements in Burkina Faso and DR Congo respectively, mobilisation can take place in the ether of cyberspace but the real struggle must take place in the real world. In fact, the writer Malcolm Gladwell has argued that the internet is far more likely to create weak ties than the strong ties that are necessary for the success of costly political action. It is hard to protest in the streets with a Facebook friend you've never met in real life.*

*We must recognise the transformative power of social media but we must neither exaggerate it nor take it for granted. It is a tool that must be harnessed, sharpened and set against the right tasks, something conferences such as these can help us with.*

*Let me finish on a lighter note. I decided to check out the Google zeitgeist for Uganda for 2015 – basically a summary of what Ugandans searched for most that year. This was one of the most political years, preceding a tightly contested election and that witnessed a falling out in the ruling party. Yet the top current affairs searches were about Pope Francis in Uganda – fair enough, MAMA Awards, Charlie Hebdo, Syria, Burundi Coup and Mayweather vs Pacquiao.*

*This suggested to me that we get local news from local news sources and, thus having no need to search for them, use our searches for global news events, right? So I looked at the "how-to" search list. Among the top 10 were such profound queries as: how to calculate pregnancy months; how to join the illuminati in Uganda and – wait for it, this one offers some food for thought – how to make mandazi!*

*There is a lot of work to be done, ladies and gentlemen, if the revolution is to be tweeted!*

*Thank you.*

## Opening Panel: Social Media redefining democratic space in Uganda: Building bridges or building walls?

Where do we stand as a country in terms of a democratic space and can we express our opinions freely? With this fundamental question, NBS's Solomon Serwanjja opened the first panel addressing the post-election situation in Uganda. *"Ugandan society and the media landscape are fairly thriving,"* stated Nicholas Opiyo, Executive Director at Chapter Four and Human Rights lawyer, adding that, in substance though, Uganda is still far from being a democracy. When policy is moving one step forward, it seems there follow three steps backwards. The best example is the social media shutdown during the elections and the inauguration of President Museveni, which was, according to Opiyo, *"not the beginning, but just the continuation of the intolerance in Uganda"*.

Rosebell Kagumire, an award winning blogger and multimedia content producer, lamented the lack of civic awareness of their rights amongst the population who therefore do not exert pressure on the government to provide services for them, which Opiyo clarified, includes also the human right for access to the internet. A sense of resignation in the country was also noted by Patience Akumu, a lawyer working with Oxfam Uganda, while government continues to limit the free space people are still enjoying in the internet. For her, the question of whether users can translate their social media activism into true civic action is crucial.

The debate that seemed to arouse most interest in the audience was whether it was legal of the government to shut down social media twice within the last six months, and the representative of the ICT minister, Moses Watasa, Commissioner for Information, struggled to explain the reasons behind the shutdowns (*"there had been a security threat"*), admitting that *"democracy in Uganda is certainly not perfect"* and encouraging discussions amongst the population and more engagement to bring the democracy *"to the next level"*





This led to further discussions in the panel, weighing the importance of freedom of expressions against security issues and the influence of government. Kagumire defined the role of the government as a “*facilitator for conversations*” and condemned laws that are selectively applied and interpreted by the government. Watasa made it clear that for transformation to happen, the government needs a critical mass of all stakeholders and declared that it also engages in programs to bring internet to the more rural areas of Uganda, which came as a surprise to the audience who had not heard of the Uganda Communications Commission’s Rural Communications Development Fund (RCDF) whose main goal is “*to effect communications interventions in areas that are underserved with the overall goal of ensuring that those underserved areas get access to communications services that are comparable to those in the served areas.*”<sup>2</sup>

## Audience Q&A

After this lively discussion, the audience was invited to ask questions. Demands for justification of the shutdowns continued, as well as for a legal framework to protect youth and maximize benefits of social media. Mr Watasa continued to have difficulties justifying the shutdowns.

Some people in the audience however came to the government’s defense, arguing that the dangers of social media are real and should be checked. One of these was Obed Katurebe, an employee of the government’s Media Centre. He gave an example of former Amama Mbabazi’s lawyer Fred Muwema who became the first person to sue Facebook after he was allegedly defamed by an anonymous Facebook user (TVO) who had alleged that Mr Muwema staged the break in into his own offices at the height of the presidential election petition by Amama Mbazi

With this logic, Mr. Katureeebe then argued that it is not just the government concerned about dangers of social media but even its opponents. He also cited the fact that Western Governments including the UK and US, are all grappling with social media being used by terrorists, and argued that Uganda is not alone.

Mr Nicholas Opio however sought to distinguish key elements of Mr. Katureeebe’s submission, clarifying that lawyer Muwema’s case against TVO was a criminal defamation and libel suit while terrorists using social media is a crime of a higher plane. Even then, he argued, there is no place for criminalization of defamation.

*“Except for hate speech, in a free and democratic society, you must allow even stupid opinions to be heard,”* he said.

He gave an example of the landmark ruling by Justice J C Mulenga in the defamation case of Andrew Mwenda and Charles Onyango Obbo Vs. The Attorney General<sup>3</sup> in which Justice Mulenga ruled in favor of the former, arguing that even offensive speech is protected under the freedom of speech provisions in the constitution.

One of the questioners was Ivan Okuda, a political analyst who questioned the veracity of the ‘security threat’ as the reason for shutdown of social media in Uganda. Mr. Okuda opined that “*regime security, not national security*” appears to have been the concern of the government in shutting down social media and curtailing other free speech rights of Ugandans. “*It is political contestation and regime protection that inform these draconian measures by the government,*” he concluded.

<sup>2</sup> <http://ucc.co.ug/files/downloads/UCC%20RCDF%20Policy%202010-11-2014-15.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.ulii.org/node/15792>



“Social media is a bar,” declared Opiyo. “We have excellent discussions there,” still, it should not be overrated, as local language via FM radio is still more powerful when it comes to influencing the people’s opinions, Opiyo said. He also underlined that the shutdowns were only a minor problem as government is filtering and censoring content every day, something activists should worry more about. Akumu added that government is “shaking in their boots” as social media are gaining more and more influence on policy matters.

Mr Opiyo added that Uganda has laws governing online behavior and electronic transactions including laws against crimes committed online. Cybercrimes such as child pornography, fraud, are all on the books. There is no need for new laws, he argued: “What we need to focus on is increasing internet access such as increasing broadband and putting more Ugandans online to be part of the 21st century global community.”

## Panel Discussions

### Panel 1: Women and social media in Uganda: breaking barriers – but at what cost?

During the panel discussion on “Women and social media in Uganda”, chair Rebecca Rwakabukoza led the audience through an interesting conversation about problems and challenges women face in Uganda when it comes to accessing social media platforms.

Goretti Amuriat, program manager at Women of Uganda Network, pointed out that a big percentage of women lack access to the internet and some won’t be able to use it – even if they had access – because most platforms use the English language which they don’t understand. It is a fact that majority of women in Uganda live in rural areas where women only could access internet at set up centers or internet cafes but they don’t have the time and money to visit and use these places. Besides, these centers are very often not secure for women.







Violence against women does not only happen offline. *“Many women have experienced online violence and harassment online, especially during the last year,”* said Amuriat. Lindsey Kukunda, who is a blogger and freelance writer, agreed with her. According to Kukunda, women get bullied online just because they are women.

Another point mentioned was that there is also too much focus on how women look like, their clothes and body shape. *“Get off our bodies and get to our brains,”* demanded Sarah Ssali, professor at the Makerere School of Gender and Women Studies. *“We can dress the way we want to dress.”*

As soon as women want to change something about this status quo and begin to speak, argued Henry Nickson Ogwal, Fundraising Director at Action Aid Uganda, *“they are demonized and attacked”*. He argued that there is a need to transform the mindsets of men for women to be accepted online. *“Our society is highly patriarchal. We begin to take it normal and think this is how things should be.”*

Godiva Akullo, a feminist lawyer, agreed with him. *“We exist within a patriarchal society, online and offline. We live in a society engineered for the comfort of men,”* she stated. According to her, feminists, who are advocates for rights of women, are the most attacked online. *“I know lots of women who censor themselves online in order to avoid harassment,”* Akullo added.

A comment by Ms. Kukunda about selfies led to a passionate debate about the sense in taking pictures of oneself. According to her, there are way too many selfies posted on social media and she wondered why anybody should care about them. *“By the time children now are 19, they will have 27,000 pictures of themselves looking good but nothing else beyond that,”* Kukunda said.

The response of the audience was immense and a huge discussion on Twitter started right away. Many participants immediately posted selfies of themselves. *“How are selfies more stupid than a post about a French manager of a British football team?”* one participant asked, of course referring to the notion that boys/men get a pass when they engage in silly and useless discussions online such as European football.

However, consensus in the end of the discussion was that there is a need to bring more men on board if women’s right is to be protected online and offline. KAS’s Mathias Kamp ended the discussion with short closing words where he said that KAS is interested in encouraging further discussions on the issue and that they will closely monitor what is already done to empower women on social media and where KAS can step in.



## Panel 2: Contemporary culture and social media: Big opportunities - tough questions

Donnas Ojok, KAS Project Manager and facilitator of the panel welcomed the audience to an interesting discussion about contemporary culture and its opportunities and challenges in the era of social media in Uganda. On the panel were four artists that shared their views on the transforming environment for their work and presented some of their pieces.

An interesting arts project about eroticism and intimacy was presented by Peter Genza, who aimed to connect this arts project to the importance of social media in our society: *“Artists express what people probably have in their inboxes on social media.”* Genza applauded social media for giving his work inspiration and a clue of what society’s interests are, whilst admitting that he doesn’t know how to exploit the opportunities to its fullest.

Social media has also been a major tool for Andrew Salema Ludigo’s work as an artist: It facilitated his connection to the youth and gave him a possibility to listen to his audience who reacted quickly, and to interact with them, at the same time expanding his audience. *“It also eases communication amongst artists, connecting them for example through the Pan African Literary Initiative,”* Ludigo said of social media. The main challenge, Ludigo added, is that still not many Ugandans are on social media.

Kyomuhendo Ateenyi agreed on the importance of social media, adding that he is still exploring the opportunities but argued that social media can bring together artists and resources such as making it possible for writers to connect with publishing houses.







A major advantage of the expanding social media use in Africa, said Harriet Anena, is the higher engagement of Africans in reading content. *"Poetry is for the elite, that is a common statement,"* she said, a statement she immediately disputed by reminding the audience that her book, a poetry collection titled 'A Nation in Labor' is accessible not only to the elite but to ordinary audiences.

The panelists agreed that artists still face huge challenges in Uganda, one of which is how to survive economically as an artist, not only offline, but also online: Even with social media and the opportunities brought by the digital revolution, the struggle for a sustainable cash flow for artists continues. Though online platforms do create opportunities for branding the art pieces online which makes marketing easier, artists have had to figure out which platform represents their photos and art in the most appropriate way.

A further struggle in content-creating on social media was named by the audience: Content on social media often seems to be driven to self-expression and entertainment. Concerns were also raised about the changing landscape, as social media generates more producers than consumers of art, which could destruct the artists' priorities. Similarly, laziness amongst consumers was criticized, as people back in the days had to come to see art consciously in a gallery or a movie theatre, but today just take a glimpse of it on their smartphone.

Further fundamental questions were raised: At what point do we stop doing art as a hobby? What is contemporary culture actually? What are my rights on the internet as an artist, how can I react to plagiarism? When we are using social media, are we communicating or are we moving beyond communication? The discussion continued on Twitter with the Hashtag #UgandaSocialMedia



## The Panel discussing the role of social media in Uganda's contemporary culture and arts. #UgandaSocialMedia



RETWEETS 6 LIKES 3

2:38 AM - 19 Jul 2016

Kampala, Uganda

6 3



@ahpetite says poetry considered a thing for the elite because it does not relate to many Ugandans #UgandaSocialMedia

RETWEET 1

2:30 AM - 19 Jul 2016



@ahpetite : we can't dictate to artists not to use social media for self expression because it also has advantages #UgandaSocialMedia

1:22 PM - 19 Jul 2016



Because of the struggles of life, many artists will end up doing Art as a hobby @ludigocreations #UgandasocialMedia

1:22 PM - 19 Jul 2016 · Kampala, Uganda, Uganda



Kyomuhendo: we have to strengthen the legal protections on our work especially on social media to earn a living #UgandaSocialMedia

1:24 PM - 19 Jul 2016



## Panel 3: Traditional media in the age of social media: challenges and opportunities for a Ugandan journalist today

The discussion was led by panelists Catherine Byaruhanga, BBC Uganda Correspondent, Remmy Bahati, News Reporter at NBS TV, Gerald Bareebe, PhD Candidate at University of Toronto and former Daily Monitor Reporter, Giles Muhame, founder and Managing Editor at Chimp Reports, an online newspaper, Edward Sekyewa, Executive Director, Hub for Investigative Media and was chaired by Joy Doreen Biira, a Journalist and News Anchor at Kenya Television Network Nairobi.

The overall take away from the panel was that Social media is helping to transform and develop the media landscape in Uganda; particularly the traditional media as the latter has been forced to innovate in order to survive in the competition that social media has brought to the news business.

Remmy Bahati, News Reporter at NBS, and Catherine Byaruhanga, BBC Uganda Correspondent, were both arrested while working as journalists earlier this year. Especially for Bahati, social media played a big role during that arrest. *“If it wasn’t for social media, no one would have actually known about it,”* Bahati said. A Twitter hashtag was created for her ([#ReleaseRemmy](#)), it went viral and actually helped to free her. Bahati’s story was the introduction to an engaging and lively discussion about the challenges but also opportunities a Ugandan journalist is confronted with today in the age of social media.





Ms. Byaruhanga pointed out that social media means more than only Twitter and Facebook. People should not forget podcasts, picture galleries and live stream broadcasting among others. *“WhatsApp is the fastest way to get news around the country these days. How do you take advantage of that?”* she asked.

An example that online journalism can sell in Uganda is Chimp Reports. Its managing editor was part of the panel and explained that he started the site in a Makerere University computer room. *“Without social media it would not be possible to be where we are,”* he said.

Chair Joy Doreen Biira, journalist and news anchor at KTN, asked if social media makes journalists lazy by waiting for the trends on Twitter to create a story out of them. Bahati denied that, stating that *“an outstanding journalist has to dig deeper”*. Gerald Bareebe, PhD Candidate of the University of Toronto focused on the enormous good things social media offers to journalists and media houses. *“I don’t know how editors interacted with their audience before Twitter, Facebook and other platforms came up,”* he revealed.

*“In the past, you had to send a letter to the editor via post office and wait for a response. Now, social media gives traditional media the chance to spread their content and reach a wide audience as well as answering to requests almost in real time.”*

Another topic discussed was plagiarism and how to deal with it. Edward Sekyewa, Executive Director of Hub for Investigative Media, called it *“shameful”* and *“bad”*. He actually has a case in court right now because someone stole his publication and just exchanged the logos. *“It is a crime and in that case I went to court because you can’t preach anti-corruption and accountability and then do that stuff,”* he lamented.

Towards the end, a participant said that while *“journalism is not dying, reporting is suffering”*, which pretty much summarized the discussion going on. There are a lot of challenges journalism is facing nowadays but social media offers chances to transform and develop the journalistic landscape and bring innovations.





## Panel 4: Advancing good governance and service delivery through social media

This panel was graced by Patrick Kayemba, Iganga District LC5 Chairman, Eshban Kwesiga, Programme Manager, Parliament Watch, Maureen Agena, ICT4D Consultant, Prossy Kawala, Journalist & Media Literacy Advocate, CEMCOD, and Peter Kauju, Spokesperson, Kampala Capital City Authority. It was chaired by Gawayu Tegulle, a Media Consultant.

“What are the best practices we can adopt to make the best use of social media in service delivery?” was the panel’s driving question.

“You cannot talk about democracy without effective participation, by all at all levels,” argued Iganga LCV Chairman Patrick Kayemba, one of the premier local government leaders active on social media. Through citizen pressure using social media, people demand to know what is going on and ultimately government has to respond. He shared his experience of using ICT tools to respond to people’s concerns in Iganga. He provided an example of the effectiveness of using the messaging service Whatsapp to communicate with fellow leaders in the district and to get instant feedback from citizens and leaders alike. For instance, when a citizen sees a broken bridge, he or she can take a picture using a smartphone and send it to the relevant authorities instantly through social media platforms like Whatsapp.

Ms. Prossy Kawala gave an example of a Zimbabwe town she recently visited whose mayor was a member of 30 WhatsApp groups in the town which complain about service delivery and alert him of areas of the town that need his intervention. She argued that government leaders must be tolerant even when they are bashed on social media. “Feedback is also important. Leaders need to give feedback to people when they reach out to them on these platforms inquiring about the state of certain public services,” she said.





KCCA's Peter Kauju explained that the city has six social media accounts and a rapid response team to respond to queries from Kampala residents that come through social media. He explained that every single inquiry is responded to in kind or through other communication channels such as phone calls and physical visits to the service being complained about.

*"Be positive and optimistic and offer constructive engagement. Offer solutions and not just criticisms. Point out positive stories as well to motivate the service delivery workers,"* Mr. Kauju encouraged the audience.

The audience engaged the panel with one complaining of the impact lack of data has on the quality of engagement citizens have with duty bearers. *"When people see figures, people react. How do we get the information to use to make the case to leaders when the data is not available?"* wondered the participant.

The session ended with a unanimous agreement on the potential of social media to affect service delivery, and the need for duty bearers and citizens to maximize its use with responsibility.

## Closing Panel & Plenary Discussion: Challenges and Opportunities of Social Media: Where are we heading?

Blogger Ruth Aine, Keynoter Daniel Kalinaki, KAS Program Officer Donnas Ojok, Feminist Lawyer Godiva Okullo and the Prime Minister's Communication Advisor Julius Mucunguzi assembled to take stock of the day and offer an overview of the day's perspectives and the way forward on the discourse around the role of social media on Uganda's sociopolitical landscape. The session was moderated by KTN's Joy Doreen Biira.

Ms. Biira opened it up by observing that the heated discussions in some of the panels were an indication that social media is offering Ugandans a chance and ability to interrogate a number of issues facing the country. *"We need to make use of the opportunity social media has presented us to make our country better without being confrontational. Whether in civil society, business, politics, the use of social media should not be seen as a challenge to the government but as a developmental tool that can foster engagement between both sides for the betterment of the country."*

With that, she asked each of the panellists to share their perspectives on what stood out the most for them during the course of the day.

KAS's Donnas Ojok opined that what stood out for him was that whether we want it or not as a country, we must live with social media as it is here to stay. Traditional vs contemporary culture is a paradox. The question is, how do we use social media, a double edged tool that can spur and kill creativity in the arts world, boost community participation and engagement but also lead to censorship and danger? A fine line has to be walked by all involved in order to have the best benefits of social media, he suggested.

Keynoter Kalinaki on the other hand said the lesson of the day for him was how social media makes you think you know people you interact with online until you meet them in person and you realize you don't. He explained that he finally met in person with people he had been communicating with on social media for more than five years and was amazed by how eloquent and smart these young Ugandans are.



*He lamented that it was a pity one doesn't see these smart people in the public sphere.*

"How do you get the young people in this room to become productive? The average of the Uganda cabinet is 70 yet that of Ugandans is 15. There is a huge disconnect between the people and those who lead them. We end up having a country that has landlords and tenants. There are those who participate in the economy, and others who just consume. You can't challenge the order if you don't own anything. There is a contest between those who own the country and those who are striving to express themselves and their creativity in that country. This can only lead to disorder if the right decisions are not taken."

"Every decision on a story you run is subjective. If you live in a society with all those problems, you can't be objective. You have to take a stand. But you need to make a distinction between facts and your opinion and make them very clear. I think the thing journalists suffer from most is lack of intellectual curiosity. Just be professional and transparent and give people an opportunity to challenge you," he said.

Julius Mucyunguzi compared the explosion of social media in Uganda to "new wine in old bottles." He said the social media reality is new to the government that is still old-school and traditional in its operations. "We should bring the old wine and the new wine together. Political leaders are increasingly realising they cannot afford to be left behind."

During meetings he has with colleagues in government, Julius said that some government officials think social media has been hijacked by the opposition. "I always tell them that they should stop lamenting and address the concerns people are raising. People want a piece of their voice in the conversation. They want to participate. Leaders need to understand the era of dictating to the citizens is over."







 **Sarah Ssali**  
@sssalie Follow

@j\_mucunguzi: There must be a desire to engage with the state online & offline. Not just being active on social media.  
#UgandaSocialMedia

5:54 PM - 19 Jul 2016 · Kampala, Uganda, Uganda

← ↻ ❤️ 1

 **KAS Uganda & S.Sudan**  
@KasUganda

The time for lecturing people is over. The people we serve as government want to have a say. @j\_mucunguzi at #UgandaSocialMedia conference

A MONTH AGO

 **Patience Akumu**  
@Patienceakumu Follow

@j\_mucunguzi public affairs should be managed through discourses like #UgandaSocialMedia @OPMUganda @OxfaminUganda

5:51 PM - 19 Jul 2016

← ↻ ❤️ 1



Time for lecturing is over, more dialogue and discussions - @j\_mucunguzi.  
#UgandaSocialMedia pic.twitter.com/3XK5qAVBc7

TRAC FM @TRACFM - A MONTH AGO

 **Harriet Anena**  
@ahpetite Follow

Social media is creating a level of impatience. It's a generation of instant food, instant replies etc ~ @j\_mucunguzi #UgandaSocialMedia

5:51 PM - 19 Jul 2016

← ↻ ❤️ 7

 **Sarah Ssali**  
@sssalie

@j\_mucunguzi: govt officials encouraged to deal with the disruption from social media in a constructive way. @KasUganda #UgandaSocialMedia

A MONTH AGO

The feminist perspective also featured in the closing panel and plenary discussion:



 **TRAC FM**  
@TracFM Follow

"What should women be doing, that they are not doing in the social space" - @JoyDoreenBiira #UgandaSocialMedia

5:07 PM - 19 Jul 2016

← ↻ ❤️

 **Evelyn Lirri**  
@Elirri

We need to appreciate that a free social media environment benefits all including those in government says @j\_mucunguzi

 **Rosebell Kagumire**  
@RosebellK Follow

There's space for young women to come online & take part in these conversations. -@amgodiva #UgandaSocialMedia

5:09 PM - 19 Jul 2016

← ↻ ❤️ 2

## Conclusion and Way Forward

- Donnas Ojok, speaking from the perspective of the arts panel he chaired, argued that social media is instrumental in the arts. *"We need networking, engagement, and to use social media as a marketplace for art."* Soundcloud, Twitter, Facebook are all platforms that offer free showcasing of one's talent. He gave an example of a recent eroticism performance in Kampala that got attention of foreign audiences through social media.
- Ruth Aine reiterated her earlier questions: *"How do we take care of those who have no access to the internet so that no one is left behind? Social media is an enabler to reach unreachable places and people including those we represent who have no access. Availing the internet to those that do not have it is a worthy cause,"* she said.
- In defending some modest regulation of social media, Julius Mucunguzi argued that a free social media environment benefits all including those in government. He added that social media being a new phenomenon, laws must be adjusted to deal with its consequences. This was contested by Kalinaki however, who said that government should regulate sectors where regulation is more urgent such as boda bodas that have become killing machines in Uganda and leave the cyberspace alone. Others argued that regulation is good but it should come after consultative engagements with all stakeholders.
- Kalinaki called for online deference and cohesive engagements so that we can all learn from one another. This includes sharing knowledge, and accepting criticism and divergent views. *"We need to unlearn some of the things we believed. Social media makes us go in our own corners and avoid clashing views. We need to face them so that we can have mature discussions,"* he added.
- The danger with social media activism, another audience member added, is that conversations can be futuristic and not rooted in reality. Online activism must be preceded by or marched with offline engagement. Societies are built physically by citizen agents, not some obscure army on social media. Said Kalinaki: *"We need an offline sense of community that builds these coalitions before bringing them in cyber space. 5000 followers can't help you. Go back to the analog world and build a community then bring it to cyberspace."*
- Julius Mucunguzi added that social media is not an answer to everything. There must be genuine commitment to online and offline engagement. *"Let's not just go online to be cool. We must walk the talk."* He added that there is a danger of impatience that social media is creating among people. *"It creates an unrealistic urgency; microwave style." This sometimes applies to service delivery. The political leadership is committed to respond to demands. But the impatience is too much. "We must give time to leaders to respond to demands."* He said government must be applauded for the current vibrant ICT industry. It was the first to liberalize the airwaves. It opened floodgates. *"There are countries in Africa where there is no WhatsApp,"* he concluded.
- With more than 250 participants and around 30 engaged panelists that contributed to lively discussions and encouraged attendees to build an own opinion on social media, the 2016 Social Media Conference was a huge success.



**Paul Mwirigi, ACIM** @mwirigipaul Follow

Trending this afternoon ----> #MelaniaTrump #MichelleObama #FamousMelaniaTrumpQuotes #UgandaSocialMedia #MakeAI-ImI-orGeeks #SteveBruce

3:21 PM - 19 Jul 2016

**Vanessa A** @Vanessa\_Atim\_ Follow

Very insightful conference thanks @KasUganda for hosting! #UgandaSocialMedia 🇺🇬

4:13 PM - 19 Jul 2016

**Henry Nickson Ogwal** @nicksonogwal Follow

#UgandaSocialMedia conference has just closed at Serena Hotel. Thank you @KasUganda for organizing this. #Uganda. @RosebellK @OjokD

6:06 PM - 19 Jul 2016

**Paul Ampuire** @TheJuneKid Follow

It's deserving to appreciate @KasUganda for arranging a successful discussion on how social media can be better leveraged #UgandaSocialMedia

7:00 PM - 19 Jul 2016 · Kampala, Uganda, Uganda



**Rosebell Kagumire** @RosebellK Follow

Ended #UgandaSocialMedia in style! Kudos @KasUganda for ensuring equal participation @Natabaalo @Elirri @amgodiva

7:38 PM - 19 Jul 2016

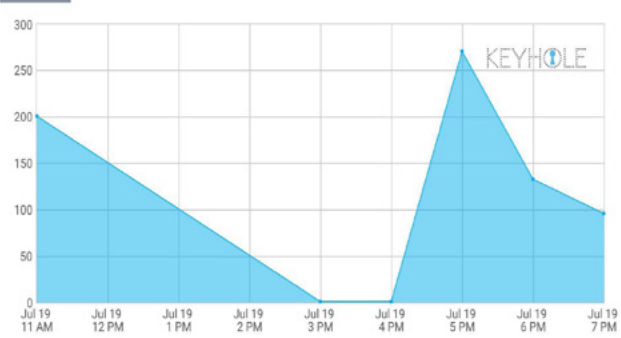
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