



#UgandaSocialMedia

SOCIAL MEDIA CONFERENCE

Facts, Freedoms and Rights
in a Connected World

THE 2017 UGANDA SOCIAL MEDIA CONFERENCE REPORT

Serena Conference Centre, Kampala
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Report compiled by Word Oven



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FOREWORD



Mathias Kamp

Country Representative
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With social media growing and gaining more and more influence, information circulates on platforms like Twitter, Facebook almost instantaneously. People get access to a wider range of sources, publications and views in order to shape their own opinions. What is called the “*democratization of information*” has become normal in a world where there has never been a larger diversity of information channels. One should think that citizens are now better informed than ever – but the reality is more complicated.

In the era of information overload, it is increasingly difficult to separate the grains from the stones. Information sources are not always trustworthy or easy to identify, especially on social media platforms. Populist voices rise and try to influence others, fake news are being spread on social media and sometimes even picked up by traditional media. Moreover, as people increasingly receive their news online, the algorithms of companies like Google and Facebook seem to be replacing to some degree the function of the traditional news editor. As people consume information that has been filtered to fit their profile they find their own opinions being echoed back at them and their perception of the world being reinforced - rather than being exposed to alternative viewpoints. Are we moving from the age of information to the age of disinformation?

I believe there is no need to panic. But we shouldn't be naïve about some of these challenging trends. A constant critical reflection of technological developments, digital trends and its societal implications is needed. The professional journalist will not be an endangered species if media houses develop the right strategies to exploit the opportunities offered by the fast changing world of social media. And public discourse shows that there is a growing awareness on some of the risks such as fake news and online manipulation, algorithms and “*echo chambers*”, hate speech and cyberbullying. We need to continue exposing the negative trends and educate users towards more “*digital literacy*” and “*social media literacy*”.

Ultimately, mitigating some of the negative effects is an uphill task, but it won't stop us from embracing new technologies because of the immense opportunities they offer. Beyond the aspects of general networking and sharing information, we are looking for instance at opportunities for social mobilization, for development work, for creative and artistic expression, for accountability and transparency. In navigating online spaces – minimizing the risks while exploiting the opportunities – we are facing questions of individual responsibility on the one hand and (*government*) regulation on the other hand. How shall we manage the balancing act between freedom and safety?

Many of these issues discussed at the 2017 edition of Social Media Conference under the theme “***Facts, Freedoms and Rights in a Connected World***” explored some of the challenges and opportunities mentioned above.

Look forward to an even more engaging Social Media Conference in 2018.

Mathias Kamp



BINYAMIN RUKWENGYE @Rukwengye

Binyamin Rukwengye is the founder of Boundless Minds, a leadership platform that develops life skills toolkits for young people and professionals. He is also the founding chairman of *40 Smiles Foundation*, a youth-led charity that uses local philanthropy to support education for vulnerable children. A journalist by training, his work in media and education is centred on developing community engagement models. He has previously worked at the Uganda Media Centre as a public affairs assistant and holds a Bachelor's degree in Mass Communication and a Master's one in International Relations and Diplomacy from Makerere University. Binyamin is passionate about youth-centred community initiatives, social justice and support for vulnerable children and youth.



LEAH ERYENYU @ironladey

Leah Eryenyu is the communications coordinator at Barefoot Power Uganda, a social enterprise focused on distributing solar lighting and charging systems to people at the base of the global economic pyramid. Before that, she was the programme manager for *Sure Start*, a MIFUMI Project in Tororo, challenging negative gender stereotypes about women and girls using karate. Part of her role was to equip girls with life skills through youth leadership, gender training, education support and child rights advocacy aimed to improve the status of girls, their school completion rates, and the gender relations in the communities they live in. Leah also holds a B.A. in Political Science from Williams College in Massachusetts.



DR. SARA NAMUSOGA @snams0

Sara Namusoga is currently a lecturer at the Department of Mass Communication at Uganda Christian University where she teaches print and digital journalism classes. Previously, Sara taught at Makerere University's Department of Journalism and Communication and has also worked as a Hansard editor in the Pan-African and the Ugandan Parliament before. Her work is aligned to new media, media policy, print and digital journalism. In 2012, Sara produced the award-winning publication, *Parliament since 1962: Our story together* with a team. The book was part of the activities to mark Uganda's golden jubilee of independence and records the parliament's history. Dr. Sara Namusoga is a resilient scholar, editor and award-winning author whose work is especially concerned with a number of areas namely, new media, media policy and print journalism. She is currently delving into the framing of homosexuality by the Ugandan press.



IVAN OKUDA @IvanOkuda

Ivan Okuda is an investigative and political journalist who has authored more than 600 mass media articles since 2009. The student of law at Makerere University started writing for national newspapers while he was still at school. At the age of sixteen, Ivan started writing for the Sunday Monitor's high school magazine 'T-Vibe'. Ivan was also featured on Al Jazeera's flagship Africa Investigates series in a 2014 documentary exposing graft in Uganda's court system. He co-leads the Centre for Media and Justice, a nonprofit organization undertaking agenda setting research, investigations and litigation in the area of human rights and lapses in governance. Besides that, he is a regular panelist on NTV's Fourth Estate talk show and KFM's D'mighty Breakfast. He also sits on the technical advisory team of Babishai Niwe Poetry Foundation.



IAN ORTEGA @OrtegaTalks

Blogger, entrepreneur, editor, engineer, and author Ian Ortega is one of the youngest inspirational figures in this country. In a country teeming with untapped Internet and social media opportunities, Ian has employed his multiple skills. Being passionate about journalism, Ian was inspired from a young age to write. The diligent young man who was the managing editor at www.bigeye.ug and is currently the CEO and Co-founder of www.campuseye.ug is one of the true pioneers of citizen journalism, something that is evidenced by the fact that he grew bigeye.ug to Uganda's most visited website.



MAUREEN AGENA @maureenagena

Maureen Agena is a consultant for Information and Communications Technologies for Development (ICT4D) working with the Agriculture Global Practice Unit of the World Bank in Kampala. 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 country office in Kenya, affiliated to Africa Region Communications team where, amongst other things, she helped with marketing social networking tools, blogging, research, and conceptualization of content. Maureen holds a M.Sc. in Information Systems from Uganda Martyrs University and St. Mary's University, Halifax Nova Scotia, and is currently completing an M.A. in Development Communication from Daystar University, Nairobi.


MATHIAS KAMP @KasUganda

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 a 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 Master's degree in International Relations and Development Policy from the Universität Duisburg-Essen.


BWESIGYE BWA MWESIGIRE @bwesigye

He is a co-founder of the Centre for African Cultural Excellence (CACE), which curates the Writivism Literary Festival. Bwesigye taught law at Makerere, Uganda Christian and Uganda Martyrs universities and was the Harry Frank Guggenheim Young African Scholar in 2015. He is a fellow at the African Leadership Centre focusing on peace, security and development. He authored the chap book *Fables out of Nyanja*, and the monograph *Finding Foot as an International Court; The Prospects and Challenges of the East African Court of Justice* and regularly contributes to the Africa-focused blogs *This is Africa* and *Africa in Words*.


ROSEBELL KAGUMIRE @RosebellK

Rosebell Kagumire is a multimedia content producer, communications specialist, trainer, public speaker, and award-winning blogger. She currently works with Women's Link Worldwide as a communications officer. 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 outlets. Rosebell has over 10 years' experience at the intersection between media and rights in crisis, women's rights, peace and security. She also has experience in emergencies communications and has 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 holds a Master's degree in Media, Peace and Conflict Studies from the United Nations mandated University for Peace in Costa Rica. She has also studied Nonviolent Conflict at the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, Tufts University.


RAZIAH ATHMAN @RazAthman

Reporter, presenter and television producer Raziah Athman developed *PM LIVE*, a programme that has been adopted as the main bulletin by Urban TV thanks to her eight-year hands-on media experience. She reported for the BBC and worked as a freelance correspondent for international broadcasters like TRT World. Raziah started and ran Kampala International University's news magazine, *The Giraffe*, while a student there, and graduated with a Bachelor's degree in Mass Communication in 2011. Besides the newsroom, She is also engaging in his initiative #UgandaReading which aims to inspire a reading culture all over Uganda.


NEIL BLAZEVIC @neilblazevic

Neil Blazevic is the manager of the technology programme of the Pan-African Human Rights Defenders Network and the East and the Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Project. His work and interests include a focus on how human rights defenders can use tools of digital security to safeguard their work and their privacy, as well as digital documentation systems to better conduct monitoring and advocacy. Neil additionally works with the Pan-African Human Rights Defenders Network where his role is to build resiliency and capacity in African civil society by implementing documentation systems, tweaking internal security practices, and enabling their web presence. In that role, he seeks to build the capacity of the African civil society to offer security nets for human rights defenders facing harsh conditions.



LILIAN NALWOGA @lilna

Lillian Nalwoga is the president of the Internet Society - Uganda Chapter and works with the Collaboration on International ICT Policy in East and Southern Africa (CIPESA) as a Policy Associate. She coordinated the East African Internet Governance Forum and Uganda Internet Governance Forum. Lillian also served on the Multi-Stakeholder Advisory Group (MAG) of the global Internet Governance Forum from 2012 to 2014. She believes in promoting appropriate use of Information Communication Technologies (ICT), in improving livelihoods, and she led a project on promoting online freedom in Africa under the *Open Net Initiative Africa*.



ANTHONY MASAKE @masakeonline

Anthony Masake is a programme assistant at Chapter Four Uganda. He is a member of the international blogger network Africa Blogging and he blogs about civil liberties and socio-political issues. Anthony represented Uganda at the *Social Media and Journalism conference* in Nairobi, Kenya, and has vast experience on effective use of new online media and social media tools to drive campaigns and disseminate information to the relevant wider public. Before joining Chapter Four, he worked with the Uganda Law Society as a paralegal officer for over 5 years and was awarded a certificate of merit from the president of the society.



MARK KAIGWA @Mkaigwa

Mark Kaigwa is a speaker, author and entrepreneur. The founder of NENDO, a digital research, strategy and training firm, is also the author of *From Cyber to Smartphone - Kenya's Social Media's Lens Zooms In on the Country and Out to the World*. Mark was named amongst Forbes Africa's inaugural 30 under 30 Best Young Entrepreneurs in 2013 during his work as partner at Afrinnovator, an East African technology journal. He has been to over 35 countries as a keynote speaker, workshop leader and professional facilitator. Mark aims for his audiences to discover A.F.R.I.C.A as Articulate Fearless Resolute Inspiring Complicated and Agile.



LYDIA NAMUBIRU @namlyd

Lydia Namubiru is the programme officer of the data journalism and research wing at the African Centre for Media Excellence (ACME). While working with Marie Stopes Uganda in 2012, she rolled out a management information system powered by text messages in over 500 clinics across the country. In 2010 and 2011, Lydia led Grameen Foundation's operational research and data collection activities and was instrumental in the establishment of the first Village Phone program in Uganda which gave poor, rural communities access to affordable phone services and created mobile-based businesses. Besides that, the graduate of Columbia School of Journalism wrote for New Vision between 2007 and 2010.



DOROTHY MUKASA @unwantedwitness

Dorothy Mukasa is a digital rights activist with Unwanted Witness, a civil society organisation with objectives to create secure uncensored online platforms for activists, netizens, bloggers, freelance journalists, and writers. As the organization's programme officer, she was instrumental in creating partnerships with communities in rural Uganda like the West Nile Press Association (WENPA). Dorothy presented a position paper on *The State of Internet Access and Power in Uganda* at the Internet Forum and Public Dialogue at Makerere University in May 2017. Some of her writing like *Why Government's Free Internet May be a Trap* have been published by the *Observer*.



MOSES WATASA @MosesWatasa

He serves the Government of Uganda as the Commissioner for Information, in the Ministry of ICT & National Guidance.



PATRICIA TWASIIMA BIGIRWA

@triciatwasiima

Patricia Twasiima Bigirwa is a programme officer at Chapter Four Uganda. In 2015 and 2016, she worked as the communications and partner liaison coordinator at L&O African Institute. She is a member of the Youth for Policy Think Tank, an initiative of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, and a permanent writer for *Africanfeminism.com*. Furthermore, Patricia is a feminist lawyer with deep interest in advocacy and writing, committed to pursuing a legal career centred on human rights, gender and the law. She has a law degree from Makerere University where she also worked as an editor for the Makerere Law Journal and as editor-in-chief of The Makererean, the university's newspaper.



KIN KARIISA @KKariisa

Kin Kariisa is the CEO of NBS Television and a director of Ecobank. He previously worked as managing director for Security Risk Solutions and served as the special presidential advisor on ICT to the President of Uganda. He has worked in the technology and media industry for more than 16 years and is the executive chairman of Kin Group Ltd, the holding group for NBS Television, Salam Television, Sanyuka Television, Screen Media, Soliton Telmec, DMARK Mobile, Cayman Consults, Build World and Dreamcatcher Productions. He lectured graduate students on e-Government and Information Security at Makerere University and Radboud University in Nijmegen, Netherlands.



JIMMY HAGUMA @PoliceUg

He is a digital forensic investigator with over 6 years' experience working with the Cyber Crime Unit of the Uganda Police. Jimmy is an instructor at the Institute of Forensics and ICT Security (IFIS), which provides comprehensive and realistic business-critical Computer Based Training (CBT) solutions for those responsible for or considering a career in a typical heterogeneous computing environment. He has also served as the acting commissioner of police in the electronic and countermeasures department directorate of ICT - Uganda Police Force.



JOSEPHINE KARUNGI @jkkarungi

Josephine Karungi is a senior news anchor and news producer at NTV Uganda. She joined NTV in 2009 as news anchor for NTV@1 and NTV Tonight. From 2011 to 2013, she was the lead anchor for the NTV Weekend Edition. Josephine is a prominent social influencer in Uganda and she has recently launched a new show called *Perspective with Josephine Karungi*, where she engages ordinary Ugandans in discussion on issues that influence society ranging from politics, lifestyle and health. Josephine is an advocate for gender equality and women's role in the media, for example, by being involved in the #womeninmediaug campaign.



DR. FLORENCE EBILA

Dr. Florence Ebila is an associate researcher at Makerere Institute of Social Research. She holds a Doctoral and Master's degree in African Languages and Literature as well as Women and Gender Studies from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, a Master's degree in Women and Gender Studies, and a Bachelor's degree in Literature from Makerere University. She is a lecturer at the School of Women and Gender Studies at Makerere University, Kampala. Her research interests are in the areas of gender, culture, feminist research and theory, feminist historiography, gender based violence, postcolonial studies, African literature and languages.



ANTONIO KISEMBO @AntonioKiseembo

Antonio Kiseembo is a multimedia specialist. He holds a postgraduate diploma in Investigative Journalism, a Bachelor's degree in Social Sciences from Makerere University and a national diploma in Journalism from UMCAT School of Journalism and Mass communication. Antonio has a wealth of practical experience in multimedia production, training and communication. He is currently working with Ultimate Multimedia Consult as a training director and a multimedia specialist. With his extensive knowledge, he teaches at UMCAT School of Journalism and Mass communication. His experience in multimedia production enabled him to work on the investigative project *The Land Question*, a video production project on how people own multiple titles on the same piece of land. He is among the initiators and organizers of the Inter-Institutional Media Challenge in Uganda. Currently, Antonio is pursuing a Master's degree in Journalism and Communication.



MIRIAM OHLSEN @dw_akademie

Miriam Ohlsen is the country representative of the Deutsche Welle (DW) Academy in Uganda. She holds M.A.s in Media Studies, American Language and Literature, and European Ethnology from the University of Bonn in Germany where she also gave the guest lecture *Social Media Basics for NGOs* after graduating. Before she came to Uganda, Miriam worked with the United Nations in New York, as well as with the GIZ in Nigeria and Indonesia.



JOSEPH OWINO @JosephOwino

Joseph Owino is a Ugandan entrepreneur with business interests in IT, social media and sports. He founded Owino Solutions Limited in order to connect as many Ugandan organisations to the online world as possible. Joseph first started working on this web development firm when he was still a student. Unhappy with the little or no attention given to local sports, he launched the East African online sports platform *Kawowo Sports* that publishes local and regional content. In December 2011, Owino received the Ericsson Young Achievers Award for his contributions to the Ugandan information and communications technology sector.



PHILIP OGOLA @PhilipOgola

Philip Ogola is a new media consultant, public speaker, social media consultant, and brand ambassador. The founder of *Digiwave*, the digital literacy programme founded to mentor youth on leaving positive digital footprints online, single-handedly revolutionized the use of social media in emergency responses in Kenya and Africa after the 2013 West Gate Mall Attack. Philip was the brain behind the #iVolunteer campaign which led to monumental success for Kenya Red Cross on social media. Philip self-branded himself as a "digital humanitarian" since he is without a doubt the champion for the use of social media for social good. Philip consults with and trains several agencies including United Nations where his expertise with social media is useful in the development of important communication policies. Philip is also a senior social media officer at African Wildlife Foundation.



RUTH AINE @Ruthaine

Ruth Aine Tindyebwa is a blogger and online communications specialist based in Kampala. 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. 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 is also currently working with the Centre for Policy Analysis which is the home to Parliament Watch Uganda.



JOY DOREEN BIIRA @JoyDoreenBiira

Joy Doreen Biira is a Ugandan broadcast journalist currently working with Kenya Television Network (KTN) headquartered in Kenya's Capital, Nairobi. She has produced content for and hosted a pan African show *Africa Speaks* whose main objective was to grow intra-African relationships by also integrating social media platforms and therefore views from around the continent. Joy Doreen's versatility and flexibility to report on Africa's current affairs has groomed her into an informed anchor, moderator, speaker, media trainer and now communications advisor on issue based events across Africa. Joy Doreen is also the host of *Business Today*, a one hour show which airs across 12 countries on the continent. In 2016, she was arrested by Police for posting photographs of a palace in Rwenzururu Kingdom during the cultural clashes in Kasese.



MUJUNI RAYMOND @Qataharraymond

Mujuni Raymond is an investigative journalist in East Africa currently working with NTV Uganda, a market-leading broadcast television station under the Nation Media Group. The innovative multi-media journalist is a two-time winner of the National Journalism Award for Explanatory Reporting and Investigative Reporting. Raymond especially reports on income inequality, technology innovations and Uganda's development agenda. His vast experience, background in law coupled with investigative journalism skills has earned him a column at the *Daily Monitor* on stories seeking to understand the region and the country. Raymond is a thought leader and fellow with LEO Africa's Young and Emerging Leaders Fellowship. The young achiever is one of the most favoured moderators for various panels in the country and is the youngest male news anchor for Prime News at NTV in Uganda.


CATHERINE AGENO @cdageno

Catherine is a journalist with over ten years' experience. She is a news editor at KFM Radio Station, which is owned and operated by Monitor Publications Limited. She serves as the secretary general on the Board of Directors of Uganda Media Women's Association. In 2016, she was awarded by the association for her exceptional coverage of the 2016 Uganda Elections. Prior to joining KFM, she worked with Lira FM in Lira town and NBS Radio Station in Jinja. Catherine studied at Uganda Institute of Business and Media studies.


OFWONO OPONDO @OfwonoOpondo

Ofwono Opondo is the Government Spokesperson and Executive Director of the Uganda Media Centre (UMC), a portfolio created to assist the Minister of Information and National Guidance. In the past he held the position of deputy spokesperson of the National Resistance Movement party. Opondo is a veteran journalist who has worked with major media outlets in Uganda and he is a regular on NBS TV top political talk show The Frontline.


MICHAEL NIYITEGEKA @niyimic

Michael Niyitegeka is the ICDL Africa country manager for Uganda and a highly sought after expert in leadership development and business technology strategy. He holds a Bachelor's degree in Organizational Studies from Makerere University and an M.B.A. from MsM/ESAMI Business School. Michael possesses 17 years of working experience in both the private and public sectors. As one of the most influential people in the Ugandan ICT sector, Michael worked with Makerere University for 12 years in varied capacities as a researcher, trainer and head of corporate relations. Michael is also heavily involved in consulting practices, in both the public and private sector. Michael is an assistant lecturer at the ESAMI Business School and a board member of Uganda Youth Forum and AIESEC Uganda. He also was a member of the ICT Technical Working Group of the Presidential Investor Round Table. Besides that, he is a member of several technology innovation review panels both locally and internationally.


MILDRED TUHAISE @mildredtuhaise

Mildred Tuhaise is a broadcast journalist at NBS Television and her roles include news anchoring, co-hosting *The Morning Breeze* show, news reporting and features reporting. She has worked with WBS TV, Top TV and FMJ/Top Radio in the past and her career spans over eight years. Mildred is also a farmer in the horticulture industry and the founder of Girls Incorporated Uganda, an NGO that empowers girls with money generating skills. Mildred holds a Bachelor's degree in Information Technology from Makerere University, Uganda.


EVELYN NAMARA @enamara

Evelyn Namara is a technologist, social entrepreneur, and founder of *Innovate Uganda*, a technology company that builds technological interventions for sustainable development. The company's flagship product *M-Voucher* was selected as a winner at the World Summit Awards in 2016 as one of the world's best digital content in the category of fighting poverty, hunger and disease. Namara holds a Bachelor of Science in Computer Science from Makerere University. The co-founder of *Girl Geek Kampala*, a platform for female IT graduates to connect and work together, is passionate about Technology for Development (ICT4D), youth and entrepreneurship as well as empowering women in technology. Besides that, Evelyn is an Acumen East Africa Fellow and an IDEX Fellow. She is also the vice-chair of the ICT Association of Uganda. Evelyn is an Anita Borg ABIE Change Agent Award winner, 2012 recognized for her role in empowering women and girls in technology.


RACHAEL AKIDI @rakidi

Rachael Akidi is an editor with *BBC Focus on Africa*, based in London and she has covered the African continent for over 15 years. She is responsible for the BBC's flagship news and current affairs programme for Africa plus digital and social media content. In September 2016, she was selected for the first BBC News Leadership Programme. She launched the BBC Africa Debate programme in 2011 and established it as a BBC World Service global brand. She holds a Bachelor's degree in Mass Communication from Makerere University and a Master's Degree in Public Communication from the University of Westminster.



Hon. ANNA ADEKE @AdekeAnna

Hon. Anna Adeke is the National Female Youth Member of Parliament representing all female youth in Uganda in the 10th Parliament. In her role as MP, she has set her eyes on the inclusion of female youth in decision making processes and seeing their participation in national development enhanced. She has made several proposals to the government to ensure that the side-lining of female youth is dealt with by bridging the gaps that limit their participation in youth affairs and programs. Anna also serves as the shadow Minister of State for Children and Youth Affairs. She also served as the 79th Guild President of Makerere University from 2013-2014.



IVAN RUGAMBWA @ivanbfa

A journalist by training, Ivan is the communications coordinator at the Léo Africa Institute, and a member of KFM's *HOTSEAT LIVE: The Friday Panel of Journalists* – a political talk show programme that analyses weekly major news events. Ivan is also a member of the KAS-supported *Young Leaders Think Tank for Policy Alternatives* and has previously published on social media and political communication in the lead up to the 2016 elections. He also worked as a reporter at The Independent Magazine.



KEMIYONDO COUTINHO @Kemi_stry

KemiYondo Coutinho is an actress, public speaker, artistic director, activist, and award-winning playwright. Passionate about using theatre to spread the African spirit, she is leading the path to develop the arts within Uganda and Africa at large. The multi-cultural KemiYondo uses her work to focus on the plight of women, especially in Africa. Two of her plays, *Jabulile and Kawuna... You're it*, bring the issue of stigmatization of HIV infected women to light. KemiYondo is also the host of Aka Dope, an event that focuses on growing arts skills that deserve to be known to the world. As a result, KemiYondo has garnered a large number of social media followers and continues to use the opportunity to push forward her belief that art can bring about immense social change.



JACKIE KEMIGISA @JackyKemigisa

Jackie Kemigisa is the content developer for Parliament Watch Uganda as well as the media coordinator at the Center for African Cultural Excellence (CACE). Jackie works as a blogger, writer, activist, and technologist. Her unrivalled social media skills and her passion for journalism, writing, and reading often produce incredible results. The Makerere University alumna is determined to bridge the information gap in Uganda and East Africa, reduce corruption evils in Uganda and encourage girls to reach their full potential. She also hopes to improve media freedoms and work on youth employment and empowerment. Jackie uses her blog to especially highlight her advocacy for human rights and a fair world.



CANARY MUGUME @mugume_canary

Canary Mugume is a Freelance Model, Writer and News Reporter at NBS TV.



JUMA KASADHA @junab2000

Juma Kasadha is a PhD student in the Department of Media and Communication. He has practiced Print journalism in Uganda since 2009 with The Observer Newspaper. Kasadha's research interests are in New Media technologies and citizen political engagement; Health Communication, journalism and Film Studies. In 2015, he authored and published Uganda's first book on its mushrooming Film industry. As a professional photographer and journalist, Kasadha was among the selected 15 photographers who traversed Northern Uganda, a once war torn region for over two decades to tell communities' stories of socioeconomic and political hope through photography. Photographic works involve projects done for United Nations Agencies in Uganda under the Northern Uganda Early Recovery Project. Part of his work was exhibited at 2011 CHOGM in Australia- Perth and has participated in numerous contests globally. His teaching experience covers Print journalism; Photography, Radio and Television Production and Film Studies at different Universities in Uganda



DR. PATRICIA LITHO @lithopk

Dr. Patricia Litho is the head of communication for the Community Outreach Rural Electrification Agency. She holds a PhD in *ICTs and the 'empowerment' of women in rural Uganda* from the University of East London. Patricia has a M.A. in Communications with a bias in Business Communication from Schiller International University in London, a postgraduate diploma in Journalism and Media Management from Uganda Management Institute and a B.A. from Makerere University where she is currently a lecturer as well. Her professional expertise in women and knowledge management has resulted in her carrying out several trainings and consultancies as well as extensive research and she is also engaging in media activism to fight for the women's rights, especially in Uganda.



08:00 am
Registration, Welcome Tea & Bites

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

09:10 am
Opening Remarks by **Ofwono Opondo**, Government Spokesperson and Executive Director of the Uganda Media Centre (UMC)

09:25 am
Keynote Address by **Rachael Akidi** (Editor, BBC Africa)

MC: **Canary Mugume** (Reporter, NBS TV)

09:45 am
Opening Panel: Social Media, Blogging and Citizen Journalism: Re-configuring Ethical Standards?

Panelists:

- **Dr. Sara Namusoga**, Department of Journalism, UCU
- **Ian Ortega**, Founder, Bigeye.ug & CEO, Campuseye.ug
- **Miriam Ohlsen**, PCountry Representative, Deutsche Welle Akademie
- **Rachael Akidi**, Editor, BBC Africa

MODERATOR: **Joy Doreen Biira**, News Anchor, KTN

11:00 am
Breakaway Sessions Pt. 1

Panel 1: **Freedom, Responsibility and Regulation: Navigating Online Spaces in Uganda**

Panelists:

- **Moses Watasa**, Commissioner for Information, MoICT & National Guidance
- **Jimmy Haguma**, Uganda Police
- **Dorothy Mukasa**, Unwanted Witness
- **Neil Blazevic**, Manager Technology Programme, Defend Defenders
- **Lillian Nalwoga**, President, Internet Society, Uganda Chapter

MODERATOR: **Ivan Okuda**, Writer & Journalist, Daily Monitor

Panel 2: **Breaking Barriers? - Youth Engagement through Social Media**

Panelists:

- **Antonio Kitembo**, Media Challenge Initiative
- **Binyamin Rukwengye**, Boundless Minds / YELP Fellow
- **Jackie Kemigisa**, Parliament Watch
- **Hon. Anna Adeke**, Youth MP
- **Ivan Rugambwa**, Youth4Policy / Leo Africa Institute

MODERATOR: **Raymond Mujuni**, Journalist, NTV

Speakers Corner:

The "Digital Humanitarian": Social Media for Social Good

Philip Ogola, New Media Consultant, Kenya

Art Goes Digital: Are Social Media Our New Stages and Galleries?

Kemiyondo Coutinho, ARTpreneur



Africa Blogging: Trends of Political Blogging across the Continent

Anthony Masake & Ruth Aine, Members of the Africa Blogging initiative

Host: **Raziah Athman**, UgandaReading

12:45 pm **Lunch**

01:45 pm

Breakaway Session Pt. 2

Panel 3: ICT and Social Media for Development: Leaving No One Behind?

Panelists:

- **Maureen Akena**, CEO, Tune Communications / ICT4D Consultant
- **Philip Ogola**, New Media Consultant, Kenya
- **Evelyn Namara**, CEO, Innovate
- **Joseph Owino**, Founder, Owino Solutions and Kawowo Sports
- **Patricia Litho**, Lecturer, Makerere University

MODERATOR: **Michael Niyitegeka**, Social Media Consultant & Trainer

Panel 4: More Opportunities, More Threats? - Feminist Voices Online

Panelists:

- **Lydia Namubiru**, Data Journalist, ACME
- **Patricia Twasiima**, Programme Officer, Chapter Four
- **Dr. Florence Ebila**, Senior Lecturer, Makerere University School of Gender & Women Studies
- **Bwesigye bwa Mwesigire**, Lawyer and Writer / Co-Founder, Writivism
- **Leah Eryenyu**, Feminist Activist and Communications Specialist at Barefoot Power, Uganda

MODERATOR: **Josephine Karungi**, NTV News Anchor

Speakers Corner:

The Art of Online Media Manipulation

Mark Kaigwa, Speaker, Author & Entrepreneur / Founder, Nendo

Press Freedom, Social Media and other short stories in between

Joy Doreen Biira (News Anchor, KTN)

The Weight of Words - Social Media and the Power of Language

Juma Kasadha (Journalist and Media Researcher, City University of Hongkong)

Host: **Catherine Ageno** (KFM)

03:30 pm Closing Panel & Plenary Discussion: **Shrinking Horizons? - Online Trends, Algorithms and the New Rise of Populism**

Panelists:

- **Rachael Akidi**, Editor, BBC Africa
- **Kin Karisa**, Executive Director, NBS
- **Mark Kaigwa**, Speaker, Author & Entrepreneur / Founder, Nendo
- **Rosebell Kagumire**, Blogger, Media & Communication Specialist

MODERATOR: **Mildred Tuhaise**, NBS

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

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

In June 2017, Konrad Adenauer Stiftung (KAS) – Uganda Country Office, held the third session of the annual Uganda Social Media Conference to provide a platform for deepening and expanding discussions around challenges that arise from social media use, but also to explore new perspectives on the same.

The 2017 Social Media Conference brought together stakeholders from the academia, government, civil society, the media, social media users and members of the public for a constructive exchange on the political and societal dimensions of the growing social media space.

To provide opportunity for constructive exchange on the impact of social media on the state, society while discussing the challenges and opportunities that exist, KAS held the conference on 22 June 2017 under the theme “Facts, Freedoms and Rights in a Connected World”.

A total of 300 participants attended the conference held at Serena Conference Centre, Kampala. The conference began with welcome remarks by KAS Country Representative Mathias Kamp, while the day’s moderator, Canary Mugume of NBS Television, steered the conversations.

The keynote speaker, Ms. Rachael Akidi, the Editor, BBC Focus on Africa Radio set the pace and tone of the day’s deliberations with a riveting presentation on the theme, “Social media, Blogging and Citizen Journalism: Reconfiguring Ethical Standards”.

A high-level panel comprising social media influencers, activists, media practitioners and government officials dissected the day’s topics that included;

- Freedom, Responsibility and Regulation: Navigating Online Spaces in Uganda
- Breaking Barriers? Youth Engagement through social media
- ICT and Social media for Development: Leaving No One Behind?
- More Opportunities, More Threats? – Feminist Voices Online
- Shrining Horizons? Online Trends, Algorithms and The New Rise of Populism

This year, KAS introduced the Speakers Corner, which provided a fresh dimension to the conference and offered an opportunity for sharing personal experiences related to social media use by different personalities. Importantly, the sessions drew participants in, by placing faces to what often appear “distant” happenings on social media, though the following topics;

- The “Digital Humanitarian”: Social Media for Social Good
- Art Goes Digital: Are Social media Our New Stages and Galleries?
- Africa Blogging: Trends of Political Blogging Across the Continent
- The Art of Online Manipulation
- Press Freedom, Social Media and other Short Stories in between
- The Weight of Words – Social Media and the Power of Language

Two parallel panel breakaway sessions, as well as a Speakers Corner, were held in the morning, and the same for the afternoon, before a closing panel wrapped up the day’s discussions with the current social media situation and way forward for existing challenges.



Welcome Remarks By Kas Country Director, Mathias Kamp

Mr. Kamp welcomed the guests to the conference, and gave special recognition to Government Spokesperson Ofwono Opondo who represented Information and ICT Minister Frank Tumwebaze at the conference; KTN news anchor Joy Doreen Biira, digital humanitarian Philip Ogola, digital researcher and strategist Mark Kaigwa from Kenya, and the keynote speaker Rachael Akidi, the Editor BBC Focus on Africa Radio from London.

He also appreciated the attendance of the different panelists, representatives of government, media houses, and members of civil society organisations, social media influencers and participants who were drawn from different professional backgrounds.

Further, he thanked NBS television for being on board as a partner and official broadcaster of the conference. He noted that having the TV station as a partner will ensure publicity of the conference debates to a wider audience.

Mr Kamp noted that the conference will focus on the political, societal and journalistic aspects and implications of social media and how we perceive the information we access through the platform.

He noted that the success of the past two conferences in 2015 and 2016, has seen a rise in demand and pressure to keep the quality of the event and discussions high.

Mr Kamp then invited Mr Ofwono to make opening remarks.



Remarks by government spokesperson, Ofwono Opondo

The government spokesperson started his remarks by emphasizing that the government of Uganda is committed, broadly, to promoting free speech and access to information.

He added that government is working with private sector players to establish physical infrastructures that can lower the cost of the internet and subsequently increase online interaction, including on social media.

Mr Ofwono referred to the enactment of the 2005 Access to Information Act as a sign of commitment by government to information access. He noted that with such laws and the proliferation of the internet, it will be difficult for government to “operate under the table”, adding that by the end of 2017, all government agencies are expected to have social media accounts – an initiative aimed at increasing government presence online.

He challenged the conference participants and all social media users to hold government to the highest standards through online advocacy to ensure transparency and accountability. “We call upon social media users to put the government and government officials on the spotlight because government and public officials hold those offices in public trust,” he said.

The government spokesperson said once the public are empowered with information, they will demand what is due to them or what government claims it stands for.

Mr Ofwono however, cautioned social media users to express themselves within the confines of the law, emphasizing that freedom, rights and privacy of other users, including that of government, should be observed online.

He made reference to the shutting down of social media last year by the government ostensibly for security reasons, saying that “he hopes such acts will no longer be repeated”. The government in shut down social media on election day on 18 February 2016 and during President Museveni’s swearing-in ceremony on 12 May 2016, drawing criticism from the general public ¹².

Mr Ofwono said: We appreciate that there is a lot of bottled up anger – economic, social etc., and as a government, we are open to examining and resolving the causes of the frustrations as expressed on social media.”

He concluded by stating that the government, through the Information and ICT Ministry should create a committee of monitors to overlook how social media is being used, but not to stifle communication and interactions online.

1 ACME (2016), *Social media shutdown in Uganda will become a norm – analysts*. Accessed here, <http://acme-ug.org/2016/05/19/social-media-shutdown-in-uganda-will-become-a-norm-analysts/>

2 ACME (2016), *Stop being paranoid about social media, activists tell Ugandan government*. Accessed here, <http://acme-ug.org/2016/05/24/stop-being-paranoid-about-social-media-activists-tell-uganda-government/>



Keynote Address by Rachael Akidi



Ms. Akidi started her keynote address by recognizing that social media has democratized and revolutionized news and communication generally. She pointed out how the young generation prefers social media as a news platform and can, with their mobile phones, access information “on the go”.

She also noted that the social media revolution has lowered the bar for entry into journalism (since anyone with a smart phone can become a citizen journalist) and disrupted the media industry, thus forcing traditional media to adapt accordingly. Ms. Akidi cited how she started as a radio broadcaster but had to expand her role to include platforms beyond radio.

Importantly, Akidi highlighted the challenges that have resulted from the proliferation of social media and social media use, such as;

- Information divide despite democratization of information – a phenomenon resulting from the fact that more than half of the population are still not connected to the internet.
- Difficulty in distinguishing between fact and fiction, due to the “freedom of expression” that social media propagates. Consequently, the idea that people are better informed because of social media becomes questionable if you consider current phenomena like “fake news”.
- Violation of/non-adherence to journalism ethics and values such as truth, accuracy and fairness. This mostly result from the craze to post or share first and fast, but also the uncritical nature of most social media users and content producers. “Can somebody tell me who citizen journalists are accountable to?” Akidi wonders.
- Invasion of privacy and disregard for decency, a practice that can be exemplified by posting photos of the dead or wounded without regard to what families of the victims feel, falsely declaring people dead on social media; as well as defamatory articles and photographs. “I’m sure many of you saw the graphic images of the immediate aftermath of his [Police spokesperson Felix Kaweesi’s] killing. What happened to privacy, respect and decency? What happened to humanity?”

In her concluding remarks, the editor offered several pointers for a rethink of social media use and the resultant dilemma it presents. Ms. Akidi noted that a century ago, the media was comprised of print media only, and later broadcast.

However, with the emergence of social media, several news and information platforms exist, putting to question the notion that journalism ethics can be adhered to by all these platforms. “I’ve always wondered whether the media is clinging onto ethics and practices that are becoming obsolete,” Akidi said.

She concluded on an optimistic ground by noting that while the media majority these days run to social media for news and information, majority still “revert to traditional media to confirm or debunk what they have read online”. As such, Ms. Akidi believes that real journalism will “continue to separate the news from the noise in this very crowded media landscape”.



Akidi's keynote address in full

I left Uganda 15 years ago to join the BBC World Service in London. When I started, the organization was going through what was described as revolutionary change. It was phasing out broadcast technology that had been used since the 1960s and was introducing computer editing software. Many of us thought at the time that THAT was as modern as broadcasting could get. Those were the days when a story would break in a remote part of Africa and we'd sometimes get to hear about it 24 hours later. Sometimes you would spend nearly 24 hours trying to verify a story that you're hearing may have happened in Kismayo or Kitgum. And there would be excitement in the newsroom when you finally found that man or woman on a crackly telephone and this would almost certainly be some local government, church or NGO official with access to a phone. I was a radio journalist and broadcaster. And that was it.

I went to work and produced programmes for the radio. I'm not sure I personally would have predicted that my role would rapidly evolve in just a few years to telling stories beyond the radio, on Platforms that didn't even exist just over a decade ago. The media was radio, television online and the press- the newspapers. I'm also not sure many traditional media journalists would have imagined competing for audiences with the likes of twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube. Who knew 10 years ago, that people would be walking around with a whole world of news and information in their back pockets? Or even handbags? These tech giants along with the mobile have completely disrupted the Media industry. Not only have business models have been disrupted. The way we communicate and distribute content has also significantly changed.

Our information consumption habits are now more complex than ever. This has forced media houses to adapt their news cycles to suit the changing behavior of the audiences. I work on a programme called Focus on Africa. When I started, it was a very dominant programme across Africa. Every time it came on air - people stopped to listen. People made an appointment with the programme at 6pm East African time. Today's young audiences are mainly mobile. They are not going to sit down at an appointed time to get news on the radio or television. They'd rather get it on the go. They want to get it on demand - at a time when it suits them. For many of this restless millennial generation, social media is their news platform. It's the first thing they check when they wake up and the last thing they check before going to bed at night. And I'm sure this is increasingly the case for many of us. So this is actually a Positive. It's an opportunity for traditional media to reach a demographic that has for generations been elusive.

In democratizing the media, the new platforms have given rise to a new movement. I call them a new movement of story tellers. You could argue it has also lowered the entry barrier into journalism; because today anyone - and I mean any one - with a basic smart phone and internet MBs can become a "JOURNALIST". I'm not talking about the reporter or writer, who trains or practices journalism professionally, but the citizen journalist; the once upon a time -audience member- who decides to perform the same function as a journalist. User generated content as we call it, is now an essential news gathering tool in many newsrooms around the world. I'll give an example of the recent tragic incidents in the U.K. The London fire and the terrorist attacks in both Manchester and London; most of the footage of the immediate aftermath that was used across various global TV networks was video taken by citizen journalists. This means that ordinary people are now able to create content that influences global agendas....in a way that was not possible before.



We've seen the emergence of new professions that did not exist just ten years ago. You have the social media producers and editors; and you have bloggers. Blogging has also become a full time profession. Some bloggers have built mini media empires, influencing policy in their localities. They've built their own audiences who follow them religiously..... and also have their own networks of other 'citizen journalists' or members of the public who tip them off and feed them with content. Some go as far as investigating major stories. Information can now travel across the world within seconds. So hearing about what has happened in Kismayo or Kapchorwa is a lot easier now.

INNOVATION

Another positive thing that the revolution has sparked off is innovation in the media. You do not only have to change but keep striving to remain ahead or risk becoming irrelevant. Staying ahead does not just involve getting content onto these platforms, but also keeping up with technology; Keeping up with the trends in the industry. Having an idea of where the next disruption is likely come from. For example, just as we are getting around figuring out how to use social media in news, and all the ethical challenges it presents to us, we are told we should be preparing for the fourth industrial revolution- Artificial intelligence. How is AI going to affect media ethics? Is it possible for the media to use AI and also preserve journalistic ethics? So it's an exciting time for the media. And it is an exciting time to be a journalist. But it is also a challenging time for the media; because these opportunities are also coming at a cost to long established ethical principles.

Traditional media has always prided itself in certain key values. When I started out as a journalist here in Uganda, I was constantly reminded about ethical issues such as accuracy and impartiality. As journalists, we have to ensure stories are verified before publication. We try to balance the story by hearing different sides or at least give people accused of anything- a right of reply. As Professional journalists, we are aware of issues to do with conflict of interest. I don't know whether it's still the case here, but where I practice; you'd have to declare any conflict of interest when doing certain stories and might even have to hand over the story to another colleague if necessary. We all know that media freedom also comes with huge responsibility. A responsibility to be fair, truthful and accurate. These are cherished ethical values which unfortunately do not seem to apply to these new story tellers. Can anybody tell me who citizen journalists are accountable to?

I've come across stories - some of them very defamatory published by some bloggers, without any attempt at getting a right of reply from the accused. I've seen whole reputations of not just individuals, but also companies



damaged on these blogs. What happened to fairness? I think we've all read opinion that has been passed off as fact- by some bloggers. We've all seen very graphic pictures of either dead or wounded people being shared across these platforms, without any regard for their families. An example that comes to mind is that of the late police spokesman Felix Kaweesi. I'm sure many of you saw the graphic images of the immediate aftermath of his killing. What happened to privacy, respect and decency? What happened to humanity?

Don't these new story tellers have a duty to filter this content? Has social media desensitized us that we no longer get shocked at such pictures and those people's families feelings do not really matter? I want to show you this photograph which I believe many of you may have seen and perhaps even shared. It was taken by my friend Anne Gidudu a couple of years ago. She was travelling in Apac district when she came across this woman. She took the picture and sent it to me. I shared it (Crediting the photographer) on my social media pages and it kind of went viral. I've since seen it being used on various platforms, and by various publications, without any credit. Every time I see it, I wonder how much money Anne would have made, if she was able to enforce her copyrights in all those instances. In other words, copyright laws are being violated with impunity on a daily basis on social media. I will paraphrase the words of Sir Charles Dunstone the founder of Carphone warehouse who said: "The MEDIA WORLD used to look like Zurich but it increasingly resembles Mumbai.

In our Ugandan context, we could say the media landscape used to look like Kabale, but now it looks like downtown Kampala, with thousands of boda bodas hooting and jostling for space. It's very crowded. There is so much noise. Every publisher in this space wants their voice to be heard. And to be heard first! And because social media success is assessed by engagement, more people are likely to click and share a story that is extraordinary. So stories are nowadays engineered by journalists to go viral. This has given birth to a new model of online journalism. We've seen the emergence of the likes of buzz feed, vice, upworthy, vox, Chimp reports here in Uganda. All great news startups. But I have to add - that- this desire to trend or go viral has also provided fuel for sensationalism.

AND not only that- It has also created a fertile environment for fake news vendors to flourish. I've seen entire fake stories published by not just the websites out to make money, but by some reputable media houses. An example is the story about 'Eritrea's government ordering all men to marry more than one wife". This story went viral for several weeks; despite the repeated denials by the authorities in Eritrea. I hear some men started searching the internet to find out how to get visas to Eritrea. Many people believed the story because it originated from a credible newspaper even if it was false. I'm sure we've all received those WhatsApp messages with so called Breaking news announcing the "death of Zimbabwe's president or Nigeria's president Buhari. Even the great Nelson Mandela was "killed" dozens of times of twitter, before he eventually died. What happened to the principles of truth and accuracy AND verifying stories before publication?

And I don't like using the word gullible. But we the audience don't appear to be critical. We don't seem to interrogate this information. Even if they appear to be mock-ups websites of existing media houses, Just a short glance at the URL of some of these stories will tell you it is not a genuine news website. So why do we keep sharing it? Sharing it actually encourages it. Now what is even more disturbing is that some are using fake news to discredit journalism. And just to make it clear Fake news is not a story you disagree with or a story you don't like. Fake news is false news. Period.

INTEGRITY AND INDEPENDENCE

One of the key values we hold is independence. We've seen rows about bloggers being compromised around the continent. Some with political or financial allegiances that are not declared. Not just here in Uganda, but also in countries such as Kenya and South Africa. Some allegedly paid to tweet or sometimes fight proxy wars on social media --- undermining the principles of editorial integrity and independence. Now most of us use social media in our personal capacities. Have we asked ourselves who is responsible for what we say on our accounts? I'm sure most you can appreciate that it is increasingly difficult for our followers to disassociate our personal posts from our employers.

Even when we put disclaimers on our personal accounts, it is almost inevitable that if you expressed a personal opinion, it will be associated with the employer. I remember a story about three years ago -of an American woman who tweeted something controversial just as she got on a flight to South Africa. Unfortunately for her, her tweet was perceived to be racist. By the time she landed in Cape Town, she had already been fired, because her tweet had caused a storm and brought her organization under enormous scrutiny. This places enormous responsibility on our shoulders as social media users, and any recklessness on our part can be very costly. NOW Where does this all this leave us? Are we better informed with all the unlimited access to information we have? My view is that despite having access to a whole world of information we may not necessarily be better informed. Because first of all, this democratization of information has also led to information divide. You have millions or the 60% who are not yet connected to the internet..... So there is a huge information divide. Secondly; even if there is more information, data, news, freedom of expression, it has become even more difficult to distinguish between what is fact or fiction. So if we cannot distinguish between fact and fiction, can we legitimately claim to be better informed? Because we are bombarded with so much information, research has shown that a big number of us actually just skim through as opposed to reading. We know with video, people hardly watch videos to the end. In adapting to the trends, several media houses have been forced to personalize content for their audiences. And while you still have traditional gate keepers or editors determining what gets published or broadcast, there is another editor that has emerged. The invisible or automated editor. This is the algorithm that determines who sees this content on social media. Algorithms are now used by several social media giants and online publications. Facebook has been in the spotlight recently for their newsfeed algorithm.

They decide what you like and tailor or personalize your newsfeed for you. This effectively forces us to follow people who THEY think share the same world view with us. In other words, we are confined to information that the algorithms believe we are interested in.....creating the so-called filter bubble or echo chamber effect. The result is that we are no longer getting the broad picture of events. We are no longer getting opposing views. VIEWS that both challenge and enrich us. Some argue that this effect was exposed during both the US elections and the Brexit referendum in the U.K. But I have to add that - there are calls for these tech companies to be more transparent in how they determine the algorithms. The argument is that Traditional media editors operate and make decisions guided by a code of ethics. What about these invisible algorithmic editors? What guidelines are they following?



PRINCIPLES/ CONCLUSION

NOW

Let me conclude by returning to the principles that underpin journalism. We have to remember that these principles were developed more than a century ago. That was a time when the media was the press, the print media. Today the media has been redefined by technology and the media is many things; it is NBS and UBC. Its Capital Radio and KFM. It's the Daily Monitor and Chimp reports. And it's even Kakensa's Facebook page! This means we are presented with situations and moral dilemmas some of which we've never experienced before. Now from this range of media houses that I just mentioned, it's clear there will be a section that will continue to uphold these ethical values. But I also think it would be fallacious FOR US to expect all of them to adhere to the same principles. I've always wondered whether the media is clinging on to ethics and practices that are becoming obsolete?!!!?

Some scholars including Charles Ess, a scholar at the university of Oslo who has researched and written extensively on ethics in the digital world - suggest that because the impact of the technology revolution so huge... we may require a new parallel set of digital media ethics. From my research, there are a number of guidelines that have been developed by different organizations, but there doesn't seem to be a consensus on the issue.

At the BBC, we agree we cannot edit the internet, BUT we can do our bit in the midst of all the noise, to inform the public. And we'll do this....By first of all sticking to our key values-- that includes providing accurate, independent and impartial information to our audiences. And we are also placing an emphasis on a concept called slow news. In other words, we shall not abandon context and depth and analysis. We will explain why certain stories matter and what they mean to our audiences? The 'reality check' service that helps fact check stories on Facebook, Instagram and others has now become a permanent service. So wherever we see a story deliberately misleading the public, the website will say so. It was used successfully during the elections.

And guess what? I think it's also important to note that despite the democratization of the media, and all the noise in this digital space, people still revert to traditional media to confirm or debunk what they have read online. So while the jury considers who is responsible for behavior in the digital world, I think It's journalism- and I mean original, truth-seeking, accurate and quality journalism that will continue to separate the news from the noise in this very crowded media landscape.

OPENING PANEL



Opening panel: Social Media, Blogging and Citizen Journalism: Reconfiguring Ethical Standards?

Panelists:

1. Dr. Sara Namusoga from the Department of Journalism, Uganda Christian University
2. Ian Ortega, Founder, Bigeye.ug and CEO, Campuseye.ug
3. Miriam Ohlsen, Country Representative, Deutsche Welle Akademie
4. Rachael Akidi, Editor, BBC Africa,
5. Ofwono Opondo, Government Spokesperson

Moderator: Joy Doreen Biira, a news anchor, KTN.

The moderator Joy Doreen Biira opened the discussion with a reflection on the role of traditional media in the face of social media penetration. Traditional media seems to be playing catch up and not utilizing social media to its full potential, she noted. In her argument, traditional media “should be the champions of social media”.



Dr. Sarah Namusoga noted that traditional media “has not embraced social media enough to keep content up to date”. She questioned why, for instance, there are rarely podcasts by traditional media, and why the interesting shows she watches or listens to on television and radio respectively, never make it online with additional and interesting information.

“Traditional media should be at the fore front of collecting, disseminating, managing and even preserving that information. We are relegating our duties to social media. Let’s push the boundaries,” Dr. Namusoga stated.

Ian Ortega on the other hand weighed in on whether social media content should be used by traditional media. In his opinion, journalists have to tread carefully while choosing whether to use online content or not. This, he argues, is because “we are in the age of attention and speed” and verification is a challenge, even for traditional media.

The issue of ethical standards and practices by social media users/online news sites Vis-a- Vis traditional media formed a big part of the discussion.

Miriam Ohlsen noted that while citizen reporters are important, the fact that they are not trained journalists necessitates training. She said at DW Akademie, they ensure adherence to ethical standards by training citizen reporters and also providing mentoring from traditional media houses to guide citizen reporters.

The assertion that social media is a threat to traditional media and its relevance, is one that many have pondered on. That is an issue that Joy picked Rachael Akidi’s mind on.

According to Akidi, the opportunities that social media provides, outweigh the threats. She listed the various pros of social media; such as improving the news gathering process, easing access to information from different parts of the world, offering a platform for audience engagement and serving as a news distribution outlet for traditional media.

While social media provides all the above opportunities that Akidi listed, there are also complaints about gagging of online users by the government. To Ofwono Opondo, Joy posed a straight forward but important question: “Are you comfortable with the way Uganda is viewed by the rest of the world in regard to allegations of media gagging?”

The government spokesperson responded by first noting that personal obligation to oneself and the community is paramount, and yet, according to him, some people believe that because they are on social media, they don’t have obligation to anybody. “Personal responsibility is core,” he asserted.

Mr. Ofwono elaborated his point in his usual no holds barred approach by stating that there are “fickle minded people” in Ugandan media who “use alleged state gagging or harassment as a refuge”. He added that the biggest threat to media professionalism in Uganda is the economy, and the business side of most media houses characterized by poor pay and training, as well as weak supervision for journalists. Social media, according to the government spokesperson, “has become a platform for extortion. Many bloggers, online magazines are now platforms for extortion”.

Ofwono's allegation of extortion by online news sites was, of course, refuted by Ortega. But Ortega went ahead to note that social media values (such as immediacy, openness and attention) are in a clash with that of traditional media such as objectivity and transparency, and yet "we tend to judge online media based on traditional media values".

To Akidi, it is okay to write about and defend a person or their business as its wont on some online news sites. The problem, she said, is that most times such relationships and conflict of interest are not declared, thus raising ethical issues. "Let's not pretend that we are doing it objectively when there are undeclared allegiances". According to the BBC Focus on Africa Radio editor, traditional media and social media are like a couple that must work together.

While the panelists seem to agree that social media offers immense opportunities for social media, discussions about the implications of the need to stay ahead of each other was the other issue discussed. Is social media putting pressure on traditional media houses to try and remain relevant to an audience that thrives on gossip? That's a question Joy posed to Mr Ofwono.

The government spokesperson stated succinctly that pressure to win over audiences should not be at the expense of fact and credibility. Traditional media "should establish facts", he stated.

While that seems to be an important point to make, the question of officialdom by government and its agencies, and the resultant difficulty in making headway with investigative stories by journalists; was an issue Joy put across to Ofwono.

However, the government spokesperson stated, matter-of-factly, that "a skilled and serious journalist cannot fail to get facts about what they are investigating". In fact, some journalists don't try hard enough or get compromised along the way, according to Ofwono. The claim that official processes frustrate investigations by journalists is just an excuse, according to him. Instead, he said the spotlight should be shifted on CEOs of media houses, whom he said frustrate journalists for the sake of profit and pleasing their advertisers.

Audience Q&A

The five questions from the audience focused on ethics, and the relationship between social media and traditional media.

Norah Owaraga noted that plagiarism is a huge problem that needs to be emphasized and tasked the panel to throw more light on the same. Moses Sebuyira on the other hand wondered whether the codes of journalism ethics as we know it apply to social media as well.

For Ivan Okuda, the threat and challenge that social media purportedly pose seems to be an exaggeration. He wondered what amounts to facts, pointing instances where government sends out propaganda as facts. "Is there a universal definition of facts?" he wondered, adding



that something that is “not a fact today might be found to be true tomorrow”. He challenged the panelists to explain where the place of freedom of expression is, amidst all these calls for facts on social media.

Mohles Kalule stated that social media should be treated like any other media and as such, ethics that apply to traditional media should also be applied to online news websites. “We shouldn’t be overwhelmed by its [social media] newness,” he asserted.

Finally, a comment from Lydia Namubiru challenged the notion that there is a contrast between social media and traditional media. “Isn’t it time to retire the false dichotomy between social media and traditional media? Journalism is journalism whether [practiced by a] citizen or trained profession. The platform shouldn’t change the standards.”

Akidi acknowledged that plagiarism is more prevalent with the advent of social media but added that enforcing rules against it are difficult.

On ethics, Ortega said that there’s need for a discussion on how to formulate ethics in regard to new media. “We shouldn’t discuss ethics as if they are etched on stone. We shouldn’t base on the traditional ethics. Let’s discuss the ethics of the future,” he asserted.

Mr Ofwono on the other hand said facts can’t be compromised. He asserted that the media is powerful and as such, social media has to be accountable for whatever content. “If you think telling lies is durable, how come ‘Uganda confidential’ is now defunct?” he wondered.

The session ended with a call for responsible social media use. Dr. Namusoga stated that there is need to include the issue of responsibility in any discussion about social media; a discussion about who defines that responsibility for social media and traditional media; and an acknowledgement that while citizen journalists do not want to be policed, the society needs to emphasize that using social media within the boundaries of the law, is important.

PANEL DISCUSSIONS



Panel 1: Freedom, Responsibility and Regulation: Navigating Online Spaces in Uganda

Panelists:

1. Moses Watasa (Commissioner for Information, MoICT & National Guidance)
2. Jimmy Haguma (Uganda Police)
3. Dorothy Mukasa (Unwanted Witness)
4. Neil Blazevic (Manager Technology Programme, Defend Defenders)
5. Lillian Nalwoga (President, Internet Society, Uganda Chapter)

Moderator: Ivan Okuda (Daily Monitor journalist)

What is freedom?

Ivan Okuda, the session moderator began the panel by asking what freedom is. While some of the panelists said freedom is the will to do what one wants to do without any hindrances, others noted that freedom is not boundless but contextual and has to be enjoyed within the confines of the law.

Jimmy Haguma pointed out that “freedom is not necessarily free”, while Moses Watasa asserted that freedom comes with responsibilities. He made reference to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) which Uganda ratified, as well as the constitution, which he said both provide for freedom of expression but with a note on responsibilities, the common good and stability.

“In Uganda, we have the constitution which also talks about freedoms and freedom of the media but there are also exemptions. We also have laws that regulate media – all these are meant to ensure decency, professionalism and quality of information that is given out,” Mr Watasa said.



The state of Internet freedom

The panelists also deliberated on whether there is internet freedom in Uganda. Lillian Nalwoga noted that the situation of internet freedom in Uganda is “partly free”, before adding that the situation is deteriorating. She asserted that the state is becoming inquisitive about what users do online, which is resulting in the curtailing of voices.

Dorothy Mukasa agreed with Nalwoga by asserting that while she believes in regulation of the internet, it should be done in conformity with international standards. She pointed out that current laws on internet regulation are ambiguous and “criminalise you before you even commit an offence”. She said government needs to be accountable the same way it demands accountability from the public.

On the other hand, Neil Blazevic said it’s impossible for government to monitor everything that happens online. “It’s not worthwhile and undesirable.” He added that no one wants to feel that they are being watched when they are online.

Internet shutdown

The two-time shut down of the internet by government in February and May 2016, was an issue the panelists deliberated on. While government has been accused of shutting down the internet without clear reasons except the blanket explanation of “national security”, Mr Watasa said there is commitment, on paper and in practice, to free online spaces. He added that the internet shutdown affected government officials too, not just citizens. “We are also on social media so when it is shut down, we also get shut down. I didn’t know how to use VPN. When they opened it, I also resumed tweeting.”

When asked what government means by “national security” and whether in fact the government is concerned about the security of the president and not the citizens, Watasa said sometimes the state needs to be protected so that citizens can, in turn, also be protected. He appealed to Ugandans to “have faith that our security people are doing the best for our security.”

However, Mukasa thinks that any internet shut down should be guided by standards, after all the current government prides itself as democratic. She lamented that there is no guarantee that the internet won’t be shut down again.

Nalwoga on the other hand said, while she acknowledges that internet regulation is necessary (to curb offences such as child pornography and cybercrimes), there must be acceptable standards for regulation. “I have looked at all the laws and there is no definition of national security. When do we know that national security is being threatened?” she wondered.

Pushing back state overreach

Amidst all the challenges online users face, the panelists discussed what options exist to counter and push back at government overreach and gagging online.

Blazevic asserted matter-of-factly that government shut down of the internet in 2016 was an overreach as well as the arrest and detention of Makerere University research fellow Dr. Stella Nyanzi. He says citizens and civil society actors should keep pushing back at government overreach.

While some internet users have embraced anonymity to overstep state restriction or prosecution, Blazevic noted that anonymity is under attack by internet service providers who implement real name policies and other identifications as requirements for having an online account.

“We are all competing for attention and we pay for our attention. Anonymity introduces trade-offs,” he said.

Watasa made a second appeal for Ugandans to be more trusting of security agencies and the state in regulating the internet. “If we restrict [internet use] once in a while, please bear with us,” he pleaded, before adding that the state is between a rock and a hard place, in that when they restrict freedoms, they will be damned, and if they don’t and something bad happens as a result, they will be damned.

Audience Q & A

The questions and comments from the audience centered on online safety as well as the safety of individual data in the hands of the state. Norah Owaraga made a passionate appeal for data protection through an enabling law. “You [the state] are not protecting my data. There is no law in Uganda protecting my data. Whose obligation is it to protect my data? Telecom companies are using my data to bombard me with all sorts of nonsensical adverts,” she asserted to applause from participants.

Another participant said regulation should not reach an extent of stifling communication. “Online media allows us attention seekers to reach a wider audience,” he said.

The panelists concluded the session by appealing for standardized regulation of internet use, responsibility in the use of the internet and education of users on data sharing and protection since it is a global problem. Mukasa particularly stated that private companies need to be checked on how they use citizen data. “These are private companies but because they are in bed with government, they use our data obtained during ID verification anyhow.”

Haguma however made a strong case for individual protection of data and online safety first, before government can do the same. He asserted that “we are responsible for our security and the information we share. If we don’t care about online safety, [how can we be] waiting for government to come up with a law?”



Panel 2: *Breaking Barriers?* - Youth Engagement through Social Media

Panelists:

1. Antonio Kiseambo (Media Challenge Initiative)
2. Binyamin Rukwenge (Boundless Minds / YELP Fellow)
3. Jackie Kemigisa (Parliament Watch)
4. Anna Adeke (Youth MP)
5. Ivan Rugambwa (Youth4Policy / Leo Africa Institute)

Moderator: Raymond Mujuni (Journalist, NTV)

Are there regulations or barriers to youth engagement on social media? That's a question the session moderator Raymond Mujuni posed to the panelists.

Ivan Okuda took the first shot by listing a raft of barriers to youth engagement on social media such as expensive data, limited access to the internet, unaffordable smart phones (which are essential for internet access) and unemployment among the youth that makes internet access a luxury.

Benjamin Rukwenge on the other hand noted that one in ten youths cannot afford education and meals, and as such are unlikely to engage on social media. He reiterated the fact that internet data is still expensive, citing examples where a member of a WhatsApp group takes three days to respond to a query because they don't always have internet data to be online. He appealed for a rethink of ways to engage with the youth offline.

Jackie Kemigisa weighed in on how barriers to social media interaction can be broken. She stated how Parliament Watch which she works for, creates digital dialogues by livestreaming

conversations from Parliament, some in local languages. Jackie however pointed out to the fact that reach is limited for such initiatives because some parts of Uganda still have no network connectivity despite the fact that 65% of social media users are youth.

Amidst all these barriers, how does one make social media content interesting to young people who can afford to be online? Antonio Kisembo says engaging with the youth online, asking them questions, sharing video content, interacting about specific and topical issues, and continuously improving content based on feedback, has worked for him.

Antonio noted that many young people use social media as a refuge to vent and release whatever issues they have bottled up. He noted that in rural areas, there is Facebook zero and while it doesn't users to access videos and pictures, they can still communicate with one another. As such, it is safe to say penetration of the internet as well as interaction is increasing since young people are always looking for new things.

In terms of policy interventions, Okuda things there is need to stop viewing the internet as luxury, and government should fully embrace technology as an opportunity. "What happened to the free internet initiative in Kampala?" He said embrace the idea of smart cities will make information gathering and sharing easier.

Anna Adeke made an important revelation by stating that legislators have not fully appreciated internet as a human right, which she says, makes it difficult for them to prioritise it, and therefore explaining why parliament budget for stationery is growing despite MPs being supplied with iPads. "The stationery budget is still growing because even with IPads, many prefer hard copies, citing eye problems. Maybe we need a smarter way for them to embrace social media," the MP said.

Rukwengye added that young people should start finding ways around constraints to social media use, such as using their phones to engage in online policy, and lead the way if government has failed to do so.

Kemigisa pointed to the fact that in Uganda, unless one is 15 years, they cannot own a national identity card and can therefore, not register a SIM card which automatically disqualifies them from engaging on social media.

She, however, noted that with Parliament Watch, people are more interested in what their legislators do due to the live social media updates about what takes place in the house. She listed a raft of strides made in making Parliament visible such as:

- Holding social media trainings for MPs
- Personal assistants of MPs participating in regular tweet chats
- Speaker of Parliament showing interest in a recent tweet chat
- Online presence of Parliament
- Online archive of Parliament
- Providing accurate information on Parliament, e.g. explaining what 'adopting' and 'debating' a report means.



Audience Q & A

The moderator asked the audience to list reasons why they think the youth are not engaging in policy discussions on social media. Several reasons were cited such as:

- o Some people have data but looking up policy and laws is not a priority
- o Some intelligent users are apathetic, they think even if they engage on social media, nothing will change
- o Some youth lack critical thinking skills, they haven't thought about how policy and laws affect their day to day life so they don't engage
- o Cyber bullying; intolerance to opinions, lack of objectivity and personal attacks on those who express their views
- o Censorship
- o Bad internet service
- o Some youth don't know how to use the internet, they are not intelligent users, e.g, they can't find reports
- o Some teenagers in school can't use phones because they are forbidden, and school administrators frown at the internet calling it "unholy distraction"
- o People are afraid of saying too much on social media and prefer to be politically correct.
- o It is difficult to verify accounts of public figures which makes youth hesitant to engage such policy makers.

In response to the above points, Adeke appealed for tolerance online and respect to each other's views. Rukwenje added that there is need for the youth to know when to end a conversation that exchanging words.

So how can we change conversations online, asked Raymond. Kemigisa thinks the trick lies in creating consumable content, segmenting information for different audiences, using radio to disseminate social media content since majority of Ugandans still use radio and using the Dr. Stella Nyanzi approach of shock language to make people think about important issues in the country. Okuda on the other hand thinks making the youth tech savvy by partnering with private sector players and government through provision of ICT equipment and laptops will cause change in how the youth engage on social media.

SPEAKERS CORNER



The “Digital Humanitarian”: Social Media for Social Good

Philip Ogola, a digital humanitarian, was instrumental in using social media to rescue those who were trapped in West Gate Mall in Nairobi, Kenya during a terrorist attack. He made the following points in regard to the topic.

- o Let's use social media to monitor people's reactions. In case of a sad story, put yourself in the shoes of the victims before you post something.
- o As we tweet, let's think of the danger we are putting people's live in. During the Westgate Mall terrorist attack in Kenya, a journalist tweeted that a prominent person and his family were hiding in the basement and the attackers went and killed him.
- o At Westgate Mall terrorist attack in Kenya, I was able to reunite families using social media. I discovered the power of social media in saving lives, telling stories, becoming part of a social movement.
- o Social media gives us power to change narratives. Digital story telling is a critical component.
- o Social media helps in getting donor funding, but the biggest issue is accountability. Make your employees part of your project so that when donors come asking questions, they can give satisfactory information.
- o In Africa, we don't tell our stories, yet it gives us the power to change our narrative. We wait for international media like BBC and CNN to tell our story.
- o Social media can cut your expenses by half, if you use it well.



Art Goes Digital: Are Social Media Our New Stages and Galleries?

Kemiyondo Coutinho declared that social media is the new stage for artistes since it has moved artists from traditional platforms onto digital platforms. She had a range of ideas to share in support of this assertion:

- o If you have a platform, you have power, and privilege as well. Recognise your privilege, understand the responsibility that this privilege comes with, and use the privilege to bridge the gap between you and those that don't have that privilege.
- o Having a smart phone is a huge privilege...do you have a Smartphone, why aren't you writing? You are a story teller but not using social media, what are you waiting for?
- o Everyone is an artiste. Art doesn't have to provide the answers but it should ask the questions.
- o Create your own audience. I knew that once I have an audience who has a relationship with me, whether they hate me or like me, I could promote what I need to promote.
- o Be deliberate in what you post. I always know what my next project is. I am not interested in how you get the audience but interested in what you do with the audience.
- o Don't wait to be hired. I wasn't getting jobs because no one was telling my stories. If I am not writing my own stories, who will? If I'm not casting myself, who will? Create a web series with your phone, write a blog, etc.
- o Digital can't replace traditional media. We shouldn't do away with the traditional but bridge the gap. To do that we need to use the privilege which social media is.
- o Stop waiting for people to give you things. The power is in your hands. If you have a smart phone, what is stopping you?



Africa Blogging: Trends of Political Blogging across the Continent

Ruth Aine is no stranger to using social media to share her blog posts and thoughts. She asserted that there is still substantial self-censorship on social media with some bloggers restraining themselves. Even with the space that social media offers, Aine thinks that freedom of expression is constrained and as such users can't do all that they would want to.

She added that "threats are real" against bloggers, but as long as a blogger is able to let the public know their trouble they are in, pressure will be mounted for a rescue.

Anthony Masake, a blogger, noted that the media landscape in Africa has witnessed several developments but it continues to punch below its weight. As such, he believes that political bloggers can fill that space being created by mainstream media.



PANEL DISCUSSIONS



Panel 3: ICT and Social Media for Development: Leaving No One Behind?

Panelists:

1. Maureen Agena (CEO, Tune Communications / ICT4D Consultant)
2. Philip Ogola (New Media Consultant, Kenya)
3. Evelyn Namara (CEO, !nnovate)
4. Joseph Owino (Founder, Owino Solutions and Kawowo Sports)
5. Patricia Litho (Lecturer, Makerere University)

Moderator: Michael Niyitegeka (Social Media Consultant & Trainer)

The panelists deliberated a number of issues including the relevance of hackathons, production of local content for social media and the need for tech people to speak a language that their audiences understand.

Maureen Agena, made several observations on the role of social media, challenges it poses and rethinking rights and protection of minorities online:

- o Back then, mainstream media was the ultimate. You had no say. They set the agenda. Today we can participate; can fact check, contribute, verify and influence.
- o People limit social media to Facebook and Twitter but there is so much more to it.
- o We need to rethink issues of ethics, plagiarism, content, intellectual property rights, privacy and family. Parents distance themselves from social media but they should be involved so that they can monitor their children.
- o We need to rethink how we talk about minorities and children's photos being posted online. Children are digital minors. Responsibility starts with you.

Speaking on content production, Joseph Owino said that behavioural change is required for Ugandans to become online content producers and providers.

- o We should be taking charge of shaping our own narratives. Not sit back and let others speak on our behalf.
- o We don't want to contribute to things that appear to be sophisticated and yet we have the information. We don't publish enough about ourselves. That's why issues of plagiarism come in because we are taking the easy route.

Philip Ogola remarked that online content or any content for that matter, should not come from journalists only.

- o We can get content everyday about Uganda.
- o There is need for institutional changes even at university level. Put in place structures where people are enlightened to be part of storytelling.

Dr. Patricia Litho recommended the need for basic training on the use of Social media. She said some people are self-trained but majority aren't. "Who has taught these people that we brand illiterate to use social media."

Hackathons and their relevance

The question on why hackathons don't make as much headway and impact was deliberated on quite a bit. Evelyn Namara argued that the way most of hackathons are prepared is wanting. "When there is prior planning, you know exactly what you are going to do and when you get into the room, you are just really redefining exactly what you want."

Maureen Agena stressed that the role of hackathons can't be downplayed, considering that most people in tech circles met and built functioning products because of hackathons. She however, appealed to tech people to ensure they can express themselves. "It doesn't matter how tech savvy and geeky you are. If you can't convince investors about your app, you can't market the app anywhere," she said.

Philip Ogola on the other hand noted that tech people speak their own language, have their own circles and think they are superior. "That attitude shuts out the public," he noted before advising that hackathons should be solution-based and inculcate public's opinion.

Audience Q & A

The questions and comments from the audience focused on what action needs to be taken to make traditional knowledge suitable for the social media audience, whether online users should be taken through the basics of online use in lieu of high illiteracy rate in the country as well as how to rescue organisations that do not update their websites and social media pages.

Namara responded that every government should enable connectivity by working with private sector to get relevant and useable content. "People will buy MBs as long as there is good and relevant applicable information."



Agena pointed out that language barrier is a problem to social media use. “We call people who can’t speak or read English illiterate.” She added that photography and videography are ways in which those who can’t read and write can benefit from social media.

On why most organisations and government agencies don’t update their websites, Dr. Litho said there is usually no one dedicated to handling social media content or to update websites.

Ogola added that most government agencies don’t have a solid communication or social media digital plan. “Social media is anchored on planning and a competent team. Hire communications experts to be in charge,” he advised.

Parting shot

The panellists made several recommendations, some of which included tailing content to audience needs, packaging data in a manner that suits our business and local situation, and having a distinct social media account so that with time, one can start making money from their social media content.

Agena stressed that hackathons are still relevant but noted that people in the tech fraternity need to learn new ideas and solutions and use their social media platforms to understand audiences instead of having a monologue and not a dialogue. Namara on added that hackathons need to be well planned.

Michael Niyitegeka, the moderator, concluded the session by stating that everyone needs to be intentional about being part of the social media world. “My mom need not be online, I could be her voice, her channel.” He said there is need to contextualise the social media environment to our environment and go beyond the basics and reference to computer literacy as a pre-requisite for social media use.



Panel 4: More Opportunities, More Threats? - Feminist Voices Online

Panelists:

1. Lydia Namubiru (Programme Officer Data Journalism and Research, ACME)
2. Patricia Twasiima (Programme Officer, Chapter Four)
3. Dr. Florence Ebila (Senior Lecturer, Makerere University School of Gender & Women Studies)
4. Bwesigye bwa Mwesigire (Lawyer and Writer / Co-Founder, Writivism)
5. Leah Eryenyu (Feminist Activist & Communications Specialist Barefoot Power, Uganda)

Moderator: Josephine Karungi (NTV News Anchor)

What is feminism?

The session moderator Josephine Karungi kicked off the discussion by posing the question: What is feminism? Leah Eryenyu said feminism is a conscious effort of challenging and shifting ecosystems of beliefs that see women as less than men, or hold men and women captive.

Feminist voices online

The panelists noted that women have not yet occupied space online as desired. While they acknowledged that there is an increasing number of female voices online, the reaction to that has not been pleasant. Lydia Namubiru said women are far from arriving online. "As more space opens online, we are starting to see women speak, but because we are not used to that, we are seeing abuses; women are termed too loud, too forceful."



Patricia Twasiima concurred with Namubiru's argument, saying while she acknowledges that there is backlash against feminist voices online, women are able to say "don't talk to me like that".

The Stella Nyanzi effect

The panelists agreed that social media is amplifying feminist voices in a way that traditional media can't. For example, they pointed out how Dr. Stella Nyanzi uses her Facebook page to project feminist agenda and gain traction on the different issues she stands for, something traditional media would not carry.

Dr. Florence Ebila on the other hand observed that the state was not ready for women to speak up about what is considered unwomanly or provocative, explaining why Dr. Nyanzi was arrested and detained. As a result, Dr. Ebila says many women are self-censuring online, and many can't comment on injustice without caring about who will read it. "I don't think many of us have reached that level of self-liberation that Stella Nyanzi has."

Karungi asked the panelists to comment on claims that feminists only jump on "hot" issues to gain publicity and money, while ignoring other pressing issues that affect the rural woman.

Eryenyu however, said that feminists do not only exist online but they are part of a community where they uplift fellow women through various projects and initiatives. Dr. Ebila argued that it is problematic for people to assume that there is only one type of feminism. She cited the bride upcountry who beautifies herself to look good on her wedding as feminist, as well as those who are in savings groups to gain economic independence. "Anything that challenges sexism is feminism."

Dismantling enshrined sexism

The panelists were asked to speak on allegations that they attack, rather than woo those who criticize them. Twasiima said there are people who are interested in learning and those who are hell bent on trolling feminists online. "We should not conflate trolling for criticism."

Bwesigye Bwa Mwesigire, a proud feminist and the only male on the panel said people have believed something for so long that to tell them otherwise shocks them. "To tell some men that to have a penis in your pants doesn't mean you are smarter is a shock."

Audience Q & A

Norah Owaraga wondered why discussions about feminism tend to mean women issues. She challenged the audience to think about the role they play in raising an oppressor. "I have been in situations where my fellow women pull me down", she said, noting that men should be included in the feminist discussion as well.

However, Godiva Akullo, said while at individual level it's important to raise children not to be oppressors, oppression itself is systematic and needs to be dismantled. She gave an example of how a child who writes that a woman is the head of the family instead of a man, will be marked wrong by the teacher even if he is raised by a single mother.

Emmanuel Ainebyoona, a journalist with Daily Monitor commented that women often are not willing to speak to the media and complain that the media doesn't cover them. Lydia Namubiru countered that argument by saying that the argument that women don't want to speak to the media is an excuse that has to die. "Having female voices in a story is a basic journalism requirement."

Walking the talk on feminism

In their conclusive remarks, the panelists called for self-assessment in regards to feminism, patriarchy and sexism. Bwesigye noted that often times, people talk against patriarchy and in support of feminism and yet they do the opposite in their personal life. He noted how some people still consider women as less human. "Why is it an insult to call a man a woman? The fact that you think calling a man a woman speaks volumes. People think women are not human enough."

Dr. Ebila on the other hand appealed to women representatives in Parliament to speak about issues that affect women instead of assuming that their presence in the House is sufficient representation. She noted that injustice meted out against women, affect the people around them and extends to the community, thus the need to stop these injustices all together.

Twasiima challenged those who say they are feminist to ask themselves if they are ready to dismantle sexism, patriarchy and oppression. "Don't say you are a feminist and do the opposite. We are trying to create a safe space in a very unsafe space and we should not apologise for that."



SPEAKERS CORNER



The Art of Online Media Manipulation

Mark Kaigwa is your typical social media expert, analyst and researcher. He stated that the trust we had developed for social media, for instance logging in and hoping to get important information has changed over the years. He listed the different ways in which online media manipulation takes place, such as:

- o Sock-puppets: This is when somebody opens hundreds of on-line identities and manages/ runs them. That means many people you follow or classify as your friends could just be one person holding several different identities.
- o Advertisers, especially in South East Asia, contact social media managers and pay to have many followers for business purposes. What happens when sock puppets get together? We get meat puppets. Imagine if you enter a college dorm and find six people and each of them has 1200 physical identities. Each can single-handedly form a WhatsApp group and post a message to trend. So all the while, the public does not get authentic messages, but messages from people who fool you to believe that what they are sending is legitimate conversation. They get paid and split the difference between them and their friends.
- o Ro(Bots): This is someone who can write a script for a political figure and put it online to make a political figure seem popular. The dangerous part of this is when journalists stop talking to real people physically and talk to those on Facebook, twitter, blogs and trending puppets. People believe in what is trending, so journalists believe that they are doing a public good yet they are legitimizing a rumor that should have been dead on arrival. They go ahead and make it a front page story.
- o Next time you look at your timeline, know there is money at play for you to like a post on Facebook, Twitter or WhatsApp message.



Press Freedom, Social Media and other short stories in between

Joy Doreen Biira was in the spotlight in 2016 when she was arrested for posting a photo of Rwezururu king's palace on fire. That incident mirrored the hurdle social media users face when they share content that government deems is an infringement on national security. Joy shared several points in regard to this topic:

- o At what point as journalists are we willing to say, well this is it? Are we willing to put the truth on hold, are we going to hide the truth because "they could kill me?" I asked myself what if I hadn't posted this [photo] on Facebook and Instagram? How much more would have been left out about the situation in that part of the country [Kasese]. Sometimes it gives relief that what you did helped expose some rot.
- o As netizen journalists, how much responsibility do we have in reporting the truth and ensuring that what we are reporting is not fake news? There is need to get facts from all sides to give a clear picture of what happened in a certain situation. When reporting conflict, we have to be careful how we craft our story. Every time we give only one side of the story, it is definitely going to affect the entire situation.
- o Press freedom in my experience, has gotten worse because of the kind of laws that govern media in the country and the African continent. I was looking at the press freedom index and I realized that Uganda has dropped a number of places...the entire East African region has dropped a number of places except for Kenya, which moved up by two places. One of the reasons they gave was that east African countries are gagging the media a lot because we have leaders who think they are protecting their democracies by gagging the media.
- o We can control fake news. As mainstream media, let us not wait to counter fake news, let us not do catch-up writing, we need to be a step ahead and write the story before fake news is put out there. We can do this if our editors or news managers rise up to the fact that today news moves fast.
- o To all netizens and mainstream journalists, whatever we do with our gadgets is up to us to ensure it brings out the truth, justice and accountability from our leaders. Today we have phased out journalists who ask questions; today we conclude and concur with the status quo. When we have people in authority giving views about certain political, socio-economic events, we tend to concur with them and never even ask why certain things continue to happen. This in a way is affecting the way we deliver our news and tell our stories.



The Weight of Words – Social Media and the Power of Language

Juma Kasadha, a journalist and researcher started his presentation by stating that if mainstream media gets shut down, social media will take over because the latter is so widely used, and policy makers will have no choice but to embrace it. On the weight of words, he wondered if the language we use on social media moves and transforms society.

- o Social media provides the connectivity which we need to embrace and explore other than taking people who use it to jail. Let's think of how we can transform ourselves and the community using social media through connectivity.
- o Removing someone from our circle of friends on social media breaks our connectivity because members in that circle understand the same language.
- o Depending on the words we use, we cluster ourselves and become a grouping on social media.
- o The words we use and how many times we use them have an impact on society, e.g. the Dr. Stella Nyanzi pads campaign started from social media and ended up in the community. It transformed the society where more than 2,000 girls benefitted from the pads campaign.
- o The wordings you use can attract followers.

PANEL DISCUSSIONS



Closing Panel & Plenary Discussion *Shrinking Horizons? – Online Trends, Algorithms and the New Rise of Populism*

Panelists:

1. Rachael Akidi (Editor, BBC Africa)
2. Kin Karisa (Executive Director, NBS)
3. Mark Kaigwa (Speaker, Author & Entrepreneur / Founder, Nendo)
4. Rosebell Kagumire (Blogger, Media & Communication Specialist)

Moderator: Mildred Tuhaise (NBS news anchor)

The closing panel discussed the credibility of social media content, the place of traditional media amidst social media penetration and quality of content amidst developments such as live coverage and live streaming.

Kin Karisa stated that not everything that trends on social media platforms will form part of the 9pm news content on the television station he runs [NBS TV]. He appealed to media houses to invest in people who can sieve information on social media. He added that NBS uses social media to book appointment for people to watch their events/news. “If something happens in Uganda and it is not on NBS update within 10 minutes, come and I will give you money.”



Rachael Akidi emphasized the need for verification of all social media content and transparency in selection of the information put on online news sites. “Verify. Check before you share or retweet. Some media houses don’t observe the same values on their social media pages like they do on their mainstream networks,” she said.

Rosebell Kagumire cited cases where the traditional media has been victim of false news, illustrating why verification is crucial.

Mark Kaigwa said often times there is temptation to think that social media and traditional media are bitter rivals, which is not the case. He urged traditional media houses to be willing to experiment and see what they can milk out of social media.

The panelists were asked whether they buy the idea of commercializing social media content and whether it is feasible. Karisa said it is difficult to do so, unless traditional media creates “a cartel” and jointly agree on how to do it. Relatedly, Akidi said several media organisations have tried to paywall their content, but it has not worked. “The Financial Times in the UK has been the most successful. The jury is still out asking why; is it leadership? What is it?”

While some traditional media outlets in Uganda have embraced new ways of information dissemination such as live TV coverages, livestreaming, using Facebook Live tool, among others, the question of quality arose. However, Karisa downplayed that concern, saying some people want to be experts on what they do not know. “I have told my people at NBS that we know our product better than people out there. We don’t have to take everything they say. Some people just have nugu [envy]. There are those who are “experts” on how to run a media house and think they can do it better than us who went to journalism school.”

Voices from the conference

Benjamin Rukwengye: *"I liked the diverse panels. There was something for everyone and the fact that there were many young people on the panels. That made it relatable. The speakers' corners was a good idea too. Next year, I look forward to having some research-based discussion on the effects of social media, especially on traditional media. There has been a lot of subjective debate about morals and ethics and threats, but no real verifiable data on how many people get news from Twitter feeds versus those buying newspapers, for instance."*

Godiva Akullo: *"What stood out for me at the conference was how representative the crowd that attended was of Uganda's population demographics. The crowd was majorly young and young people were adequately represented as panelists and speakers. The panelists and speakers were for the most part extremely knowledgeable of the things they were addressing. Next year I'd like to see more in depth engagement with the issues in our society that social media is unearthing not just the surface engagement with the ways the different platforms are used. We have discussed the value of social media and how Ugandans use it. I'd like to see us discuss the actual conversations that are happening on social media and how those can be/have been/will be translated into change/transformation in the physical realm or what some call "in real life."*

Antonio Kitembo: *"The portion of the conference that stood out the most to me was the Speakers Corner: The Art of Social Media Manipulation by Mark Kaigwa. Learning how fake news is spread and how online manipulators ride on ignorance of people's failure to read and verify accounts. This makes people to unknowingly amplify biased or misleading information. I'm looking forward to understanding the dynamics of social media algorithms, how they work and how one can take advantage of them."*

Joel Benjamin Navender: *"I liked the technical stuff. Kaigwa's sessions were very knowledge filled because he didn't speculate but told us how the web works and how to influence it. The talk of algorithms was scary but being a service provider means finding a way to use them. What could be better? All sessions being accessible."*



TWITTER FEEDBACK

27% 6:22 p.m.

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 **Rachael Akidi** ✓
@rakidi

Honoured to have delivered the opening keynote for the 2017 #UgandaSocialMedia conference. A very insightful day. Thanks @KasUganda



8:53 a.m. • 25 Jun 17

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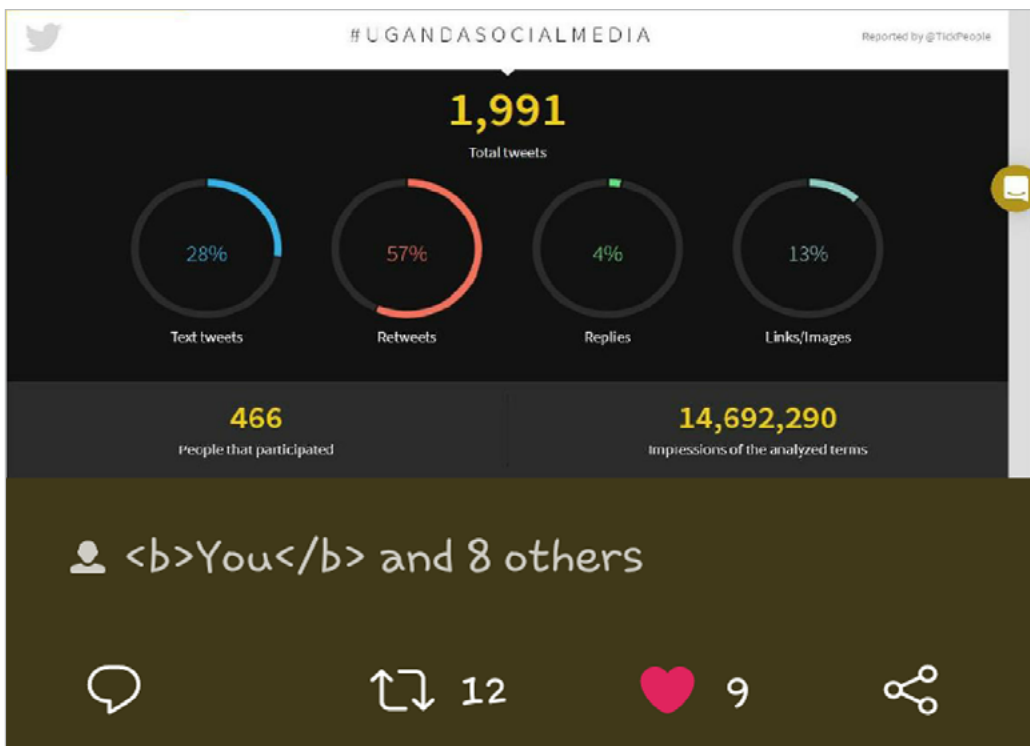
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 **NBS Television** ✓
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• @rakidi: Any responsible media house has a duty to protect its journalists #UgandaSocialMedia



11:16 a.m. • 22 Jun 17







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Joy Doreen BIIRA retweeted

 **Joy Doreen BIIRA** ✓
@JoyDoreenBiira


Was an honour moderating and speaking to some of #Uganda's brilliant minds at 2017's #UgandaSocialMedia conference. Thanks to @KasUganda 🙏



• KAS Uganda & S. Sudan and 9 others

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 **Bottom Line**
@elaima3

• @rakidi: Social media is influencing editorial policies. We're able to reach far places we didn't expect be4 #UgandaSocialMedia #NBSUpdates

4:24 p.m. • 22 Jun 17

Bottom Line @elaima3 • 22 Jun
Replying to @elaima3 and @rakidi
As long as you're transparent, their shouldn't be an issue about authenticity. #UgandaSocialMedia #NBSUpdates

Tweet your reply

30% 6:12 p.m.

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 **Arthur Musinguzi**
@arthurtotally

We thought social media was for young people but @OfwonoOpondo is here with us on the panel. #UgandaSocialMedia 😂😂



10:42 a.m. • 22 Jun 17

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 **Patrick Bitature**
@patrickbitature

These days one would rather reach you over social media than call to communicate. That's how much #UgandaSocialMedia has grown.

10:38 a.m. • 22 Jun 17 from Uganda

24 Retweets 38 Likes

EliJah!!! @EliJahBryant18 • 22 Jun
Replying to @patrickbitature
@Sweetlopez3 that's the new error internet is more cheap

Tweet your reply



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