



AFRICAN MEDIA BAROMETER

A home-grown analysis of the
media landscape in Africa

UGANDA 2022

Published by:

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ISBN: 978-99945-56-28-1

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The African Media Barometer (AMB) is a perception index. The findings, interpretations and conclusions reported are those of panelists drawn from civil society and media organisations for the purposes of conducting the AMB, and do not necessarily reflect the views and opinions of *fesmedia* Africa, the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung or the Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA).

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The African Media Barometer

The African Media Barometer (AMB) is an in-depth and comprehensive description and measurement system for national media environments on the African continent. Unlike other press surveys or media indices the AMB is a self-assessment exercise based on home-grown criteria derived from African Protocols and Declarations such as the Declaration of Principles on Freedom of Expression in Africa (2002) by the African Commission for Human and Peoples' Rights. The instrument was jointly developed by *fesmedia* Africa, the media project of the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES) in Africa, and the Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA) in 2004.

The AMB is an analytical exercise to measure the media situation in a given country which at the same time serves as a practical lobbying tool for media reform. Its results are presented to the public of the respective country to push for an improvement of the media situation using the AU-Declaration and other African standards as benchmarks. The recommendations of the AMB reports are then integrated into the work of the 20 country offices of the FES in sub-Saharan Africa and into the advocacy efforts of other local media organisations such as MISA.

Methodology and Scoring System

Every three to four years a panel of 10-12 experts, consisting of at least five media practitioners and five representatives from civil society, meets to assess the media situation in their own country. For 1½ days they discuss the national media environment according to 39 predetermined indicators. The discussion and scoring is moderated by an independent consultant who also edits the AMB report.

After the discussion of one indicator, panel members allocate their individual scores to that respective indicator in an anonymous vote according to the following scale:

- 1 Country does not meet indicator
- 2 Country meets only a few aspects of indicator
- 3 Country meets some aspects of indicator
- 4 Country meets most aspects of indicator
- 5 Country meets all aspects of the indicator

In 2009, 2013, 2019 and 2021 some indicators were replaced to align with changes in the media landscape. Consequently, in some instances, the comparison of indicators of previous reports is not applicable (n/a), as the indicator is new or has been amended considerably.

The sum of all individual indicator scores is divided by the number of panel members to determine the average score for each indicator. These average indicator scores are added up to form average sector scores.

Outcome

The final, qualitative report summarises the general content of the discussion and provides the average score for each indicator. Panellists are not quoted by name in the report, in order to protect them from possible repercussions. The reports can be used as a tool for possible political discussion on media reform.

In countries where English is not the official language, the report is published in a bilingual edition.

In facilitating the AMB, the FES and MISA only serve as a convener of the panel and as guarantor of the methodology. The content of the discussion and the report is owned by the panel of local experts and does not represent or reflect the view of FES or MISA.

By the end of 2022 the AMB had been successfully completed 128 times in 32 African countries, in some of them for the sixth time already.

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See above 32 AMB Countries (2005-2021)

African Media Barometer

UGANDA 2022

Summary

Along with the protection of freedom of expression, Article 29 of Uganda's Constitution of 1995 also provides for the protection of freedom of conscience, movement, religion, assembly and association. While many supporting laws bolster the right to freedom of expression, many pieces of supplementary legislation nullify it, some of which date back to the colonial era.

Numerous contentious clauses have severely restricted the work of the media in disseminating information.

Although the Constitutional Court of Uganda repealed sections 39 and 40 of the Penal Code because they were inconsistent with Article 29 of the Constitution, which guarantees freedom of expression, the remaining sections are equally punitive. Section 41 on sectarianism, in particular, carries a penalty of five years in prison and is often used to arrest and intimidate journalists. Section 50 on the publication of false news, section 179 on libel, and section 180 on defamation remain part of the Penal Code and are used to arrest and imprison journalists.

Another example is the Computer Misuse Act 2011, which includes several previously removed sections on false news and insult laws. In addition, sections 24 and 25 of this Act criminalise expression by phrasing it as cyber harassment and offensive communication. Both these provisions are vague and overly broad and give law enforcement unfettered discretion to punish unpopular or critical expression.

As a result, the Computer Misuse Act has been repeatedly used to target political opponents, dissidents, activists, and human rights advocates. Charges of cyber harassment or offensive communication were used to arrest, detain and jail academic and activist Dr Stella Nyanzi, writer and human rights activist Norman Tumuhimise, journalist Farida Bikobere, author and critic Kakwenza Rukirabaishaji, and many others. Tumuhimise and Bikobere claimed to have been physically abused, and Rukirabaishaji (now in exile) alleged that he was tortured.

(It is important to note that at the time of this report [September 2022], Uganda had just passed the Computer Misuse (Amendment) Bill 2022, which seeks to criminalise various uses of computers and digital technologies and largely curtails online freedom of expression rights. The Bill was passed despite submissions from numerous civil society organisations regarding the contentious clauses.)

The Ugandan landscape is characterised by the plethora of laws (primarily progressive) that govern almost every sector of society, conferring rights and

providing privileges. These are then reversed by contradictory directives and actions in implementation and interpretation.

Uganda was one of the first African countries to enact an Access to Information Act in 2005, followed by the Access to Information Regulations in 2011. Over the years, the country has fulfilled obligations contained in the law to a certain point.

Accessing information from public bodies has improved over the last five years, largely due to the efforts of the former Minister of Information Technology and Communications and National Guidance, Honourable Frank Kagyigyi Tumwebaze, who created a conducive environment which made information easily available to the public.

Information from public institutions and processes is often made available promptly and efficiently. Hansards are made accessible online very soon after a Parliament session ends, and the tapes of Presidential sessions are proactively sent to the media. Information from the judicial sector is also readily available. Judgments are shared on a portal soon after a case is closed, and this is also shared on a WhatsApp group that comprises critical stakeholders, including journalists. The Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development releases budget information consistently as required by the Public Finance Management Act of 2015.

The Government Citizen Interaction Centre website also allows people to interact on Government service delivery issues.

However, the Government also curtails information flow during national crises (such as during the COVID-19 pandemic) and elections. With heightening tensions prior to the 2021 Presidential and Parliamentary elections, the pre- and post-voting periods were overly restrictive, with unprecedented intimidation and election-related violence from State and non-state actors. Musician and aspiring Presidential candidate Robert Kyagulanyi, more popularly known as Bobi Wine, along with his supporters, was constantly under attack and some of these supporters were killed during skirmishes with the police and army.

The media reporting on the electoral processes were under relentless attack, especially when they featured stories relating to the opposition. Several journalists were threatened, harassed, assaulted, arbitrarily detained and arrested, and severely injured, and their equipment was destroyed.

The ability of the media sector to navigate the country's highly restrictive and particularly risky environment is testimony to its resilience. This is admirable when one considers that Uganda has one of the more vibrant media landscapes in the region, with a wide range of newspapers, radio and television stations, despite its struggling economy. Radio remains the dominant information medium for women and men nationwide, with 98% of households owning a set.

The country also has a fast-growing online space driven by rapid technological developments that have seen a greater use of smartphones in the country. The prevailing challenge is that not everyone can effectively access online spaces. Uganda has one of the largest gender gaps in internet access on the continent, despite phones being affordable and data prices competitive. However, the 12% levy, introduced on July 1, 2018, on internet data in place of the now abandoned Over-The-Top (OTT) tax, has been negative in terms of widening the gender gap.

With the autonomy to speak freely being another contested space in Uganda, citizens have welcomed the growth of online platforms where they can speak freely – if conversations focus on safe topics like entertainment, sport, baby showers or weddings. Problems arise when topics include politics and power.

'In most cases, people cannot say what they would like to because they fear reprisals that may come. Ordinary people who dare to speak out are bullied into silence. Journalists are afraid to express themselves because they are threatened individually. They receive calls, messages, and death threats from unknown people.'¹

On radio talk shows, callers are often outspoken. To curb this, the Uganda Communications Commission (UCC) ruled that calls and live coverage of events must have a time lag of 3 seconds, allowing content to be edited before going out to the public.

The issuing of directives by the UCC is a common characteristic of the regulating landscape and something the media has come to expect, which often limits freedom of expression and nullifies online rights.

The panel discussion took place at Protea Hotel, Entebbe, from 13-14 August 2022.

¹ Quotations indicate statements made by panellists, unless otherwise specified.



SECTOR 1:

Legal/regulatory framework for freedom of expression and access to information and actual practice of these rights



1.1 Freedom of expression, including freedom of the media, is guaranteed in the Constitution and supported by other pieces of legislation.

Article 29 of the Constitution of Uganda provides for freedom of expression and states:

- (1) *Every person shall have the right to:*
- (a) *freedom of speech and expression, which shall include freedom of the press and other media; and*
 - (b) *freedom of thought, conscience and belief which shall include academic freedom in institutions of learning*

So overall, the Constitution (as amended) guarantees the protection of individual rights – including freedom of the press – which encompasses media practitioners, civil society organisations (CSOs), all political groupings, citizens and companies. Freedom of expression is not limited to freedom of speech but also refers to non-verbal communication – thus, it is all-encompassing.

Freedom of expression also works with freedom of conscience, protected alongside that of association in the same Constitution article.

Freedom of expression in the Constitution is supported by additional pieces of legislation, such as the Data Protection and Privacy Act 2019, which extends the rights contained in section 27 of the Constitution. Article 27 concerns the right to privacy of person, home and other property. The Access to Information Act of 2005 extends the rights contained in Article 41 of the Constitution, which enforces access to information. The Press and Journalist Act 1995² 2000 was established to, among other things, ensure the freedom of the press, while the Uganda Communications Act 2013 (amended in 2017) promotes the establishment of a modern communication system.

It is important to note that although the Constitution guarantees freedom of expression, there are limitations to these freedoms.

Article 43 underlines some limitations on rights and freedoms, including freedom of speech and expression:

- (1) *In the enjoyment of the rights and freedoms prescribed in this Chapter, no person shall prejudice the fundamental or other human rights and freedoms of others or the public interest.*

In addition, the country retains colonial laws that impede the proper functioning of the media and restrict freedom of expression. Colonial laws, such as the Official Secrets Act 1964, and the Penal Code 1950, exist alongside other recent laws that compromise freedom of expression, such as the Anti-Terrorism Act

2 The Press and Journalist Act 1995 has been amended several times.

2002, the Regulation of Interception of Communications Act 2010, and the Computer Misuse Act 2011.

The dichotomy in Uganda is that: ‘These laws give freedoms with one hand, but take them away with another.’

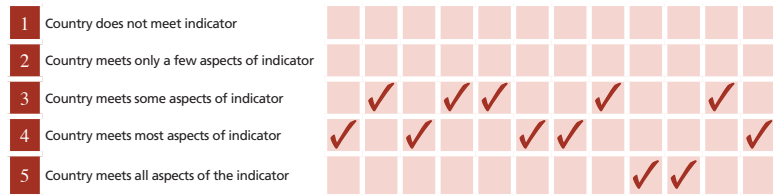
For instance, the rights contained in Article 41 on the right to access information are taken away by the Official Secrets Act, which was established to protect State secrets and security. The Press and Journalist Act, intended to ensure the freedom of the press, contains several provisions that breach fundamental aspects of the right to freedom of expression. For example, the oversight bodies established by the Act, specifically the Media Council and Disciplinary Committee, lack operational independence from the Government.

‘It is one thing to have good laws, but another to put them in practice.’

Panellists felt that there was a mismatch between the existence of good laws and their actual implementation. One panellist said that the word “guarantee” contained in the Constitution is strong. ‘We should rather say the Constitution provides.’

Scores:

Individual scores:



Average score: 3.8

1.2 The right to freedom of expression is practised, and citizens, including journalists, are asserting their rights without fear.

Some freedom of expression is observed and practised in the country, but ‘it depends on what you want to express’.

‘If you are talking about things like baby showers and weddings, you are free to talk. But when you talk of political issues, then there are problems. Space for political discussions is limited, but people freely discuss entertainment, sport and other safe topics. Despite the challenges people face of shrinking civic space, Ugandans like to talk.’

In most cases, people cannot say what they would like to because they fear the reprisals that may come. 'They are afraid because they have seen their friends, family or someone they know being intimidated or arrested. Ordinary people who dare to speak out are bullied into silence.'

'People are afraid to speak of their torture. Few media houses expose torture. Yet the information is abundant.'

For example, in most informal settlements, there is fear of speaking, of being judged. 'They are afraid to speak of their needs: services, employment, etc. It seems the Government's interests are prioritised above the protection of Uganda's people. The police are heavily militarised and responsible for widespread human rights violations. This creates an atmosphere of fear in the country.'

Over the past few years, there have been several killings of Muslims which have rocked the country. Despite being the target of attacks, they have also been at the brutal end of reprisals by the police and have been persecuted and arrested on bogus charges related to these killings without any investigations. This has inflicted fear and panic among Muslims.³

In the aftermath of a November 2021 suicide bombing in Kampala, which killed four civilians, police investigations led to the detention of 106 people and the death of seven suspects, which included a well-known Muslim cleric accused of having ties to the extremist group responsible for the suicide bombings.

The environment is restrictive for journalists who are part of the broader citizenry of Uganda. 'Fear of reprisals has gripped many Ugandans, including journalists.' Acts of intimidation and violence against journalists are an almost daily occurrence. There are many examples where the police have summoned journalists, mainly from private media, to the Uganda Police Force's (UPF) Criminal Investigations Department (CID), where they have been interrogated and threatened. During the 2021 Presidential elections, journalists covering opposition candidates were physically assaulted. Lawrence Kitatta, a photojournalist and reporter, was brutally attacked in March 2022 and since then has been in hiding and unable to work.

'Journalists are afraid to express themselves because they are threatened individually. They receive calls, messages, and death threats from unknown people.'

One journalist is adamant about not writing about corruption – 'let them eat their money'. He comes from the west of the country, where some influential political elites come from.

In February 2021, several journalists were admitted to hospital with serious injuries sustained when military police assaulted them while covering National Unity Platform President Robert Kyagulanyi (aka Bobi Wine) as he delivered

3 Why Muslim clerics fear for their lives: <https://www.monitor.co.ug/uganda/lifestyle/religion/why-muslim-clerics-fear-for-their-lives-1637670> accessed 23 March 2023.

his petition to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) in Kololo, Kampala.

One panellist shared that he was in a studio moderating a show when he received a note from the producer asking him not to discuss the issue anymore and to steer the discussion in a different direction.

Another observation added was by a journalist who noticed that the camera person at a press conference was not recording everything. When asked why, the camera person admitted that if she took a video of anything negative about the Government, her editor would not broadcast it.

These two examples are just a glimpse of the issues journalists face, showing that self-censorship has become an ingrained practice. Sometimes, what is published in the media differs from what actually happened. The narrative is modified to ensure that it does not antagonise political elites.

Uganda's media pluralism is reflected by the country's lively broadcasting scene, with more than 300 radio stations and over 40 television networks – mostly privately owned. There is also a plurality of news sources in the print and online media space. This makes Uganda one of the more vibrant media landscapes in the region.

There is freedom of expression in these media spaces, but with limitations. For instance, radio – the most popular and pervasive medium nationwide – allows people to debate issues and participate actively. On radio talk shows, callers are often outspoken. To curb this, the UCC ruled that calls and live coverage of events must have a time lag of 3 seconds, allowing content to be edited before going out to the public. Subsequently, the UCC ordered broadcast media houses to buy live broadcast pre-editing software (delayed feed technology).

The UCC also decided that some media houses should exclude certain sections of the public from making appearances on radio and TV. The directive followed live coverage of Parliament, during which several MPs protested a move to include the presentation of a Private Member's Bill to amend Article 102(b) of the Constitution on the order paper. The UCC justified the directive by saying some radio and television stations violated the minimum broadcasting standards. The Uganda Communications Commission Act, 2013, schedule 4, requires TV and radio stations not to broadcast programmes that promote violence and ethnic prejudice and those that are likely to create public insecurity or violence. Panellists stated that the Government had used the "minimum standards" rule to curtail freedom of expression and media freedom.

Despite the directive from the Government, many radio stations continue to invite panellists who are critical and outspoken. Some of them have been arrested, but this has not silenced them. For instance, Ibrahim Ssemujju Nganda from *Capital FM* continues to be outspoken and uses his privileged position to obtain information on political developments in the country.

Panellists mentioned that some political talk shows on the radio “go overboard” by peddling misinformation and distorted information. They thrive on airing controversial topics to increase listenership rather than to inform and educate. Most conversations on radio are myopic. ‘We see that radio stations follow what is trending and popular.’

Ownership patterns in the broadcasting sector also impinge on freedom of expression. Most of the FM radio stations in the country are owned by political elites from the ruling political party. Often these stations refuse to provide a platform for oppositional voices. Religious organisations also own many radio stations, making it difficult to discuss issues such as abortion and sexual reproductive rights. So, in this way, numerous radio stations also negate civil rights discussions.

Cultural barriers also impact freedom of expression in the country. With Uganda being a patriarchal society, many women feel unsafe expressing themselves on the radio or other media platforms. They fear being vilified by the public. Some also worry about what their husbands and families would say. To increase women’s participation in the media, deliberate interventions and safe spaces should be created.

‘If you want women to speak, you must be intentional. But this does not always work. Even on female-constituted radio stations such as *Mama FM*, a station set up to focus on broadcasting gender-sensitive educational programmes, women are afraid to discuss political issues.’

Uganda has one of the largest youth populations on the continent, with 78% of its citizens under the age of 30.⁴ Despite this, few open platforms on mainstream media cater to them. ‘The dominant platforms in Uganda currently are for the older, more politically inclined groups. Many young people were not born when the Constitution was established, so these platforms do not speak to them in many cases.’

Social media has provided space for talking and discussing the country, especially for the urban populace and the youth. However, people in rural and urban marginalised areas don’t always have access. Notwithstanding the digital divide, digital media platforms have afforded young Ugandans spaces for expression.

‘Ugandans have an unconventional way of expressing themselves – thus bloggers, actors, musicians are beginning to dominate the space, and so the Government is now targeting creatives.’ Panellists believe this has driven UCC to develop new laws to gag creative work. UCC now requires producers to provide the regulator with scripts before programmes are produced, while musicians need permission to host concerts and conferences. UCC has also formed a Content Committee to review creative content.

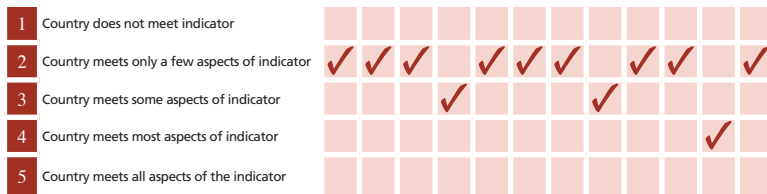
⁴ <https://www.undp.org/uganda/publications/undp-initiatives-youth-uganda>; accessed on 2 March 2023.

Despite the constraints on freedom of speech and media freedom, many journalists and media houses continue to speak out boldly. Numerous good journalists stand above political interests and work hard to deliver quality journalism. Even the national broadcaster, the *Uganda Broadcasting Corporation (Television)*, is somewhat pushing the boundaries. It has introduced a controversial political show, *UBC Behind the Headlines*, which features Government, opposition and civil society actors.

‘However, there are spies planted within several media houses,’ pointed out a panellist. ‘They report you. You are called before you have even published a story. The regulator knows. The spies reveal upcoming sensitive stories. This enables the Government to force the publication to drop the story.’

Scores:

Individual scores:



Average score: 2.3

1.3 The State honours regional and international human rights instruments that provide for freedom of expression and freedom of the media.

The Ugandan Government has ratified most regional and international human rights instruments that provide for, among other things, freedom of expression and media freedom, but there is no adequate adherence to these instruments.

For example, Uganda was among the first countries to support the African Union Convention on Cyber Security and Personal Data Protection. However, it has not been signed or ratified yet. Uganda was also the first African country to enact the model law on access to information.

‘We support and [sometimes] sign, but we do not put into practice what we have signed.’

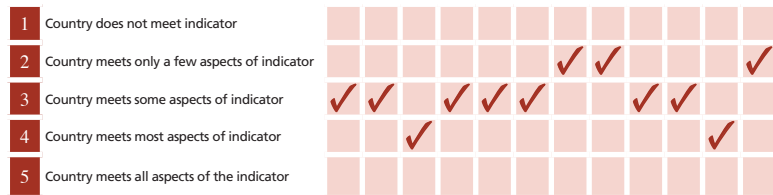
The Ugandan Government may endorse some of these international instruments to create a virtuous picture for international actors such as investors and donors. ‘We are a State that depends on external donors. It’s a public relations machine for the Government.’

As countries ratify, they must deposit the instruments so citizens can use them. Uganda has refrained from depositing. So even though the Government has signed and ratified some of the instruments, this does not translate into implementation at the domestic level.

However, it should be noted that ratifying these instruments does have a positive aspect. For example, the courts often utilise this in their judgments. Citizens also use the East African Court of Justice, a treaty-based judicial body of the East African Community, to ensure adherence to law in the interpretation, application, and compliance with the East African Community Treaty of 1999.

Scores:

Individual scores:



Average score: 3.0

1.4 The State has repealed laws that criminalise sedition, insult and publication of false news.

In 2010, sections 39 and 40 of the Penal Code were repealed by the Constitutional Court based on the case of Andrew Mwenda.⁵ The Court argued that sedition crimes, embodied in sections 39 and 40, were inconsistent with Article 29 of the Constitution, which guarantees freedom of expression.

Insult laws are still in place through section 18 of the Penal Code 1950, which discusses insult to religion. The Computer Misuse Act 2011 also contains insult laws. ‘What was removed from the Penal Code is being brought back through the backdoor by way of the Computer Misuse Act.’

The Act was enacted in 2011 to:

- a) *provide for the safety and security of electronic transactions and information systems; to prevent unlawful access, abuse or misuse of information systems, including computers; and*
- b) *provide for securing the conduct of electronic transactions in a trustworthy electronic environment.*

5 Andrew Mwenda made several comments critical of the President and the Government of Uganda on his live radio talk show. The state charged him with the crime of sedition, pursuant to sections 39 and 40 of the Penal Code because his remarks were made with the intention of bringing hatred and contempt against the President, Government, and Constitution. See Andrew Mujuni Mwenda & Anor v Attorney General (Constitutional Petition 12 of 2005) [2010] UGSC 5 (25 August 2010); available at <https://ulii.org/ug/judgment/supreme-court-uganda/2010/5/>; accessed on 13 March 2023.

Sections 24 and 25 of the Act criminalise cyber harassment and offensive communication. Both provisions are vague and overly broad, giving law enforcement unfettered discretion to punish unpopular or critical expression.

‘Vague clauses characterise the legislation, and the Government can abuse this.’

Authorities have used both provisions to target political opponents, dissidents, activists, and human rights advocates. An example is academic Dr Stella Nyanzi, who was arrested in 2017 on cyber harassment and offensive communication charges for insulting the president and his wife on Facebook. She was convicted of cyber harassment for violating section 24 of the Act and was sentenced to 18 months imprisonment.

In March 2022, armed police and military officers raided the offices of online media, *Alternative Digtalk*. They arrested several people and confiscated equipment, including cameras, laptops, and books.

Norman Tumuhimbise (writer and human rights activist) and Farida Bikobere (journalist) were charged with “cyber harassment” and “offensive communication” against President Yoweri Museveni under the Computer Misuse Act. The police alleged the journalists committed an offence against the President by publishing material from two books published by Tumuhimbise – *The Komanyoko Politics: Unsowing the Mustard Seed* and *Liars and Accomplices*. Both these publications are sharply critical of the Museveni Government.

The two journalists told the court they had been severely physically abused in State custody.⁶

A worrying development regarding the Computer Misuse Act occurred when a Parliament for Kampala Central MP, Muhammad Nsereko, tabled the Computer Misuse (Amendment) Bill as a private member’s bill in July 2022.

The Computer Misuse (Amendment) Bill seeks to enhance provisions on unauthorised access to information or data in the Computer Misuse Act and to amend section 12 of the Act to criminalise hacking another person’s electronic device and publishing information obtained. The Bill also proposes that no person shall write, send or share information likely to ridicule, degrade or demean another person, tribe, religion or gender. The background to this Bill is that some Parliament members were attacked on social media, and they felt the need for a law safeguarding their rights on digital platforms.

For example, there was an uproar on social media regarding purchasing two luxury cars valued at 2.88 billion Ugandan shillings (approximately US\$ 765,000)⁷ for the Speaker of Parliament and her Deputy. The public criticised this, calling it insensitive due to the country’s economic situation. This story followed several

6 Two Ugandan journalists charged with cyberstalking the president, remanded to prison, Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), 17 March 2022, <https://cpj.org/2022/03/two-ugandan-journalists-charged-with-cyberstalking-the-president-remanded-to-prison/>; accessed on 13 March 2023.

7 All currency conversions have been done with the date of 1 May 2023.

reports that MPs had been allocated an extra 193 billion Ugandan shillings (US\$ 51.5 million) for their allowances.

One panellist said, ‘My biggest worry is that the amended law may pass because of the emotional nature of the issue unless lawyers advise the President otherwise. Emotions are driving the law rather than pragmatics. Parliamentarians feel that they are being targeted.’

‘The supersonic speed that the law is being pushed has never happened before.’

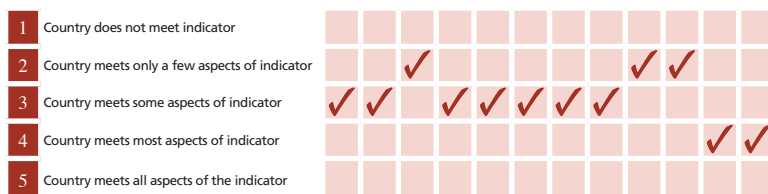
However, if the law is passed, it could take a decade to challenge in court and be heard before a judge. ‘Cases with political implications take longer before the court in Uganda.’

Although the ICT Ministry has rejected several clauses of the Bill, and there has been strong opposition from stakeholders and human rights defenders, there is concern that the Bill will be passed. (N.B. The Computer Misuse (Amendment) Bill 2022 was passed in September 2022.)⁸

Publication of misleading information or false news is not a crime in Uganda as it was decriminalised in 2005 by the Supreme Court, which declared that the offence of “publishing false news” was incompatible with the right to freedom of expression. The judgment cited a lot of international laws.⁹

Scores:

Individual scores:



Average score: **2.9**

8 Uganda Passes Regressive Law on Misuse of Social Media and Hate Speech, Collaboration on International ICT Policy for East and Southern Africa (CIPESA), 12 September 2022, <https://cipesa.org/2022/09/uganda-passes-regressive-law-on-misuse-of-social-media-and-hate-speech/>; accessed on 13 March 2023.

9 See Monitor Publications Ltd v Ricky Nelson Asiimwe (2017) UGSC 72 (30 March 2017); available at <https://ulii.org/ug/judgment/supreme-court-uganda/2017/72>, accessed on 29 November 2022.

1.5 The State has amended criminal laws on defamation and libel in favour of necessary and proportionate civil sanctions.

There is a growing trend in African countries to repeal criminal defamation laws and replace them, where necessary, with civil defamation laws. But Uganda remains one of the countries with a law on criminal defamation.

Section 179 of the Penal Code establishes criminal libel charges for publishing defamatory stories. Although the Constitutional Court declared the law on sedition unconstitutional,¹⁰ the State has used criminal defamation provisions (sections 179 and 180(1)) in the Penal Code to imprison journalists.

There are several cases where journalists have been arrested for criminal defamation. Some examples:

In 2014, journalist Robert Ssemuusi, formally working with the Central Broadcasting Services (CBS), reported on CBS radio in 2011, alleging that the former chairman of Kalangala District had stolen solar panels meant for the community. Ssemuusi was arrested and jailed for one year, despite using the word “alleged” in the story. He died while in prison.

In 2021, Pidson Kareire of *Drone Media*¹¹ and Darius Magara of *East Africa Watch* were arrested for criminal libel after publishing a story on a construction company.

A few panellists felt there was no need to send journalists to prison for practising their profession and that proportionate civil sanctions should be enough for journalists who write defamatory stories.

A prominent civil defamation case against a newspaper involves *Monitor Publications Limited*. In March 2019, the *Daily Monitor* reported that the President and his inner circle were vaccinated against COVID-19 weeks before the first doses arrived in the country. This article had been adapted from one published in the *Wall Street Journal*. The Media Council summoned the *Daily Monitor* over the story. In his capacity, President Museveni decided to take up civil prosecution and sued *Monitor Publications Limited* and the editor-in-chief for alleged defamation before the High Court in Kampala. The President promised to ‘bankrupt’ the *Monitor*. He has previously called the newspaper ‘evil’ and an ‘enemy of the state’.

At the time of this report, it was believed that the matter would be heard during the year.

10 Andrew Mujuni Mwenda & Anor v Attorney General (Constitutional Petition 12 of 2005) [2010] UGSC 5 (25 August 2010); <https://ulii.org/ug/judgment/supreme-court-uganda/2010/5>, accessed on 1 March 2023.

11 Court remands Drone Media journalist to prison, November 11, 2021; <https://hrnjuganda.org/?p=9337>; accessed on 2 March 2023.

Scores:

Individual scores:

1	Country does not meet indicator	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
2	Country meets only a few aspects of indicator				✓				✓				
3	Country meets some aspects of indicator												
4	Country meets most aspects of indicator												
5	Country meets all aspects of the indicator												

Average score: 1.2

1.6 The State prohibits discriminatory or hate speech or incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence.

Section 41 of the Penal Code prohibits the promotion of sectarianism. The section states:

- (1) *A person who prints, publishes, makes or utters any statement, or does any act which is likely to:*
 - a) *degrade, revile or expose to hatred or contempt;*
 - b) *create alienation or despondency of;*
 - c) *raise discontent or disaffection among;*
 - d) *promote, in any other way, feelings of ill will or hostility among or against;*
 - e) *any group or body of persons on account of religion, tribe or ethnic or regional origin; or*
 - f) *commits an offence and is liable on conviction to imprisonment for a term not exceeding five years.*

The State often uses this provision to penalise hate speech, mainly because the definition of “sectarianism” is vague, imprecise and broader than “hate speech”.

Section 23 (a) of the Computer Misuse Act also provides for measures against hate speech in digital spaces. Therefore, the State can use both section 41 of the Penal Code and section 23 (a) of the *Computer Misuse Act* to criminalise offline and online hate speech.

For instance, the Government arrested several people for online activities related to COVID-19 under this section of the Computer Misuse Act. In 2021, the State used section 41 of the Penal Code to arrest the Bizonto comedy group over alleged offensive and sectarian posts on a YouTube video satirising Government appointments.

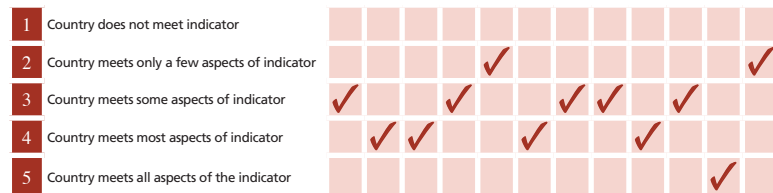
In April 2020, Uganda's Military Intelligence Agency arrested, detained and tortured Kakwenza Rukirabaishaija, a novelist and Government critic. He was in custody for seven days. The military questioned him on his published political fiction work *The Greedy Barbarian*, a book about a greedy dictator who clings to power for 43 years. After his release, he wrote a second title, *Banana Republic: Where Writing is Treasonous*, chronicling his interrogation and torture at the hands of the Military Intelligence Agency. He was re-arrested, tortured, interrogated and charged with the offence of sectarianism. Rukirabashaija has since fled the country.

The use of section 41 of the Penal Code is selective. A particular lawyer asked the police to investigate a judge who had made a sectarian statement. However, the police refused. Panellists also noted that the law seems not to apply to people practising sectarianism but to those talking about it.

'Cases are used to scare people and intimidate people into silence. The Ugandan people are very apprehensive generally.'

Scores:

Individual scores:



Average score:

3.3

1.7 The State refrains from using emergencies such as natural disasters, pandemics, or other kinds of national crisis as an excuse to curtail freedom of information.

Article 46 of the Constitution protects human rights during a state of emergency. The clause provides that during a state of emergency, an act of parliament shall not be taken to contravene the rights and freedoms guaranteed under the Constitution if that act of parliament authorises taking measures reasonably justifiable for dealing with a state of emergency.

However, protecting these rights is not always guaranteed during a state of emergency and national crisis events.

At the beginning of the pandemic in early 2020, the UCC issued an advisory warning against spreading false information related to COVID-19. It warned that

those who peddled false information would be prosecuted under the Computer Misuse Act, the Data Protection and Privacy Act and section 50 of the Penal Code.¹²

Several people were subsequently arrested or harassed for COVID-19-related offences.

In March 2020, the three media houses (*NTV*, *Spark TV*, and *BBS TV*) received letters from the UCC asking why regulatory sanctions should not be taken against them for broadcasting misleading content about the disease.

Novelist Kakwenza Rukirabashaija was arrested for committing an act that could spread the virus. He had posted a Facebook message that allegedly urged the public not to comply with social distancing rules.

A prominent cleric, Augustine Yiga, was charged and jailed for spreading misinformation and harmful propaganda. He had allegedly denied the existence of COVID-19.

There was also State censoring of information. For instance, one could not discuss the side effects of the vaccination. The Government essentially used COVID-19 to restrict the flow of information. One panellist shared that during interviews doctors would refuse to answer simple questions on how COVID-19 is spread and would refer her to Government experts instead.

During the time, the Government labelled a lot of information circulating in the public domain as “false news”. Only health and science experts sanctioned by the Government were allowed to speak. Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) were only allowed to go into communities through the State COVID Command Centre (CCC) and were threatened with arrests if they did not follow this procedure.

‘Voices that questioned the dominant narrative or the distribution of resources were somehow silenced.’

The Government has also used other national crises to curtail the flow of information. Uganda has faced the issue of hunger for many years, especially in the North-Eastern part of the country, which is afflicted by drought, disease and armed bands. Access to information on hunger is restricted, and the State is heavily invested in how these stories are covered. Journalists writing on this topic sometimes receive calls and threats. Even a small issue, like providing the numbers of people starving in a news story, might invite the wrath of the state.

Ethnicity is a divisive political issue in Uganda. Although there have been very few incidents of overt ethnic tension, incidents related to land and resource distribution, corruption, political violence, and intolerance are evidence of ethnic

¹² Under section 50 of the Penal Code Act, publication of false news is an offense. It prohibits the publication of false statements, rumours or reports which are likely to cause fear and alarm to the public or to disturb the public peace.

1.8 Confidential sources of information are protected by law and/or the courts.

Confidential sources of information are protected in Uganda under the Whistle Blowers Protection Act 2010.

The Act:

provides for the procedures by which individuals in both the private and public sector may, in the public interest, disclose information that relates to irregular, illegal or corrupt practices; to provide for the protection against victimisation of persons who make disclosures.

Protection of sources is also protected under section 38 in the *Press and Journalist Act 1995*, which states that “A journalist shall not be compelled to disclose the source of his or her information except with the consent of the person who gave him or her the information or on the order of a court of law.”

Despite these legal protections, Government officials get over-zealous and sometimes force journalists to reveal their sources. Refusal has at times resulted in torture.

‘We have been summoned by the police several times to reveal our sources.’

A journalist shared an experience about a news story his publication was working on concerning the Lotteries and Gaming Regulatory Board. The newspaper had received information about corruption at the agency. The police requested sources of this information, claiming they were working on the same case. The journalists refused to reveal the sources. The police claim turned out to be true because arrests were later made at the agency.

Another example involves the *NBS TV* news anchor Solomon Serwanjja who, in 2019, worked on a joint investigative report with a team from the *BBC*, a media partner of *NBS*. They worked on a *BBC Africa Eye* documentary, *Stealing from the Sick*, which revealed how Ugandan health professionals – doctors and pharmacists – stole life-saving drugs meant for the sick. Serwanjja, his wife, three other journalists attached to the *BBC* and the driver were arrested. They were accused of buying drugs worth 5 million Ugandan shillings (about US\$ 1,330) from Government health facilities and were allegedly scheduled to buy even more on behalf of foreign entities. The arrest may have been instigated to pressure the journalists to reveal their sources.

Journalists who wrote about the expensive cars for the Speaker of Parliament and her Deputy were also harassed by the police to reveal their sources.

Uganda was among the first African countries to enact the access to information law, followed by the *Access to Information Regulations* 2011.

'We have one of the most robust laws on access to information on the continent. The Government has tried to make information accessible. We are one of the few African countries where the Government has a website where you can ask for any information (outside national security).'

Panellists agreed that accessing information has improved in the six years since the last Africa Media Barometer. They credited this to the former Minister of Information Technology and Communications and National Guidance, Frank Kagyigyi Tumwebaze, who created a conducive environment for access to information. He was the Minister in this portfolio from 2016 to 2019.

In 2016, the Government Citizen Interaction Centre (GCIC) was established as the primary contact centre between the Government and citizens. The GCIC is structured to drive open Government activities and provide a platform for feedback and suggestions from citizens. Also, Government websites are interactive and contain helpful information.

However, panellists pointed out that some information is difficult to access, especially in the oil and gas sector. An example is the 2007 case of *Daily Monitor* journalists Charles Mwanguhya Mpagi and Izama Angelo, who requested certified copies of the Production-Sharing Agreements that the Government had entered with various multinational companies to explore the country's oil resources. The Permanent Secretary did not respond to this request. Under section 18 of the Access to Information Act 2005, he was deemed to have refused the request. The Attorney General's office also declined to disclose the agreements, citing a confidentiality clause in those agreements requiring the third-party consent of the prospecting companies. The two journalists filed the case to appeal, but the court dismissed the case. This case has set a precedent and made accessing information in the energy sector challenging.

Health information is also seen as sensitive and, therefore, difficult to access. A panellist stated that information related to COVID-19 was difficult to access at the height of the pandemic.

Administrative procedures in Government offices also make it difficult for journalists and citizens to access information. For example, accounting officers often tell journalists they have thirty minutes to get the information and leave. Sometimes seekers of information are instructed to put the request in writing.

According to section 3 (d) of the Act, every citizen is supposed to access information quickly and promptly. The Act states that citizens' requests for access to information should be processed within 21 days.

'On the 20th day, they write to you informing you that the request was unclear or is missing some information. Then you must file a new request, and you have

to wait for another 21 days. A new information request requires money, and it is not cheap.'

'If one gets one letter wrong in the request letter, you will not get the information you need.'

Because information is not given expeditiously, journalists often find it difficult to access information related to specific issues and, therefore, cannot complete their stories. This infringes on their rights.

In November 2020, more than 50 people were reportedly shot and killed during a Government crackdown on the streets of Kampala. People were protesting the arrest of opposition politician Robert Kyagulanyi. *The Daily Monitor* decided to honour the dead by running a series of profiles of each victim. However, getting information was difficult as the Government claimed they did not have a comprehensive list of the victims' names or the number of victims.

In November 2016, the military and police attacked the Rwenzururu royal palace in Kasese, resulting in the deaths of over 100 people, including children. Before the raid, there had been unrest in the Rwenzururu region following a disputed Presidential election in February 2016. The Government stated that the attacks on the royal compound were in retaliation for militant attacks on police checkpoints in the region, allegedly carried out by Rwenzururu's royal guards two weeks earlier. In the aftermath of the November 2016 operation, the Government charged hundreds of civilians, including six children, with treason, terrorism, and the murder of 15 police in six sub-counties outside Kasese. No one has heard about the people arrested since 2016. The Human Rights Network for Journalists – Uganda recently investigated the case's progress. They were not allowed to enter the prison and were denied information.

People seen as opponents of the Government are sometimes denied access to information. In August 2022, an ordinary citizen requested information from the Department of Finance. She went to the office but did not get past the reception. Instead, she was assaulted. This person has previously been in trouble for expressing herself online.

The general sentiment among the panellists was that the Access to Information Law is generally progressive. However, it is vague in specific parts and restrictive in terms of language and people with disabilities struggle to access information in accommodating formats. Blind people cannot, for example, use written documents. Language is also an issue, as most information is available in English only.

One panellist noted, 'Information is accessible depending on what it is and how it is shared. Often large PDFs are sent, and these are not user-friendly.'

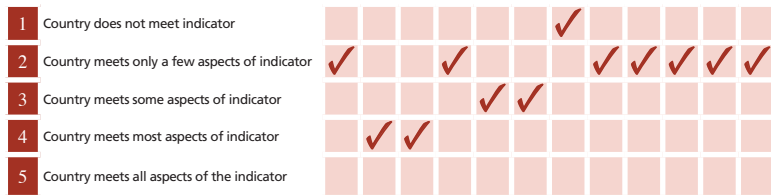
The law's vagueness pertains to the provision allowing information officers to determine whether they can give access to information. There are no specific

criteria for this determination. One panellist shared that he was running a story of a police officer who had been shot. He wanted the name of the police officer because the name in the public domain, Babangida, did not sound correct. The police refused to give the name, pointing out that the law did not allow them. Even university students who need to access information for their research, i.e. census data, are denied this seemingly benign information.

Civil servants have not been trained to provide information. Information officers and other officials in some Government ministries, departments and agencies remain ignorant about the law's importance and implementation.

Scores:

Individual scores:



Average score: 2.4

1.10 Public and relevant private bodies are required by law to proactively publicise information of public interest about their functions, activities, officials, powers, budgets, etc.

The Access to Information Act 2005 requires public bodies to provide access to information.

Section 5 (1) of the Act states:

Every citizen has a right of access to information and records in possession of the State or any public body, except where the release of the information is likely to prejudice the security or sovereignty of the State or interfere with the right to the privacy of any other person.

However, Article 41 of the Constitution and the Access to Information Act exempt private bodies and civil society. This impacts the full enjoyment of the right to access to information as some private bodies and civil society may have vital information that affects citizens or is in the public interest.

As stated in the previous indicator, the Government has taken significant steps to promote the right of access to information in some sectors. Arms of the state, such as Parliament and the judiciary, are doing an excellent job of

sharing information about their functions. Parliament is open, and the Hansard is accessible, apart from the limitation on filming inside Parliament. However, the tapes of Presidential sessions are sent to the media.

The judiciary is also doing well in releasing information. Once a judgment is released, it is shared on a portal created by the judiciary and on a WhatsApp group with relevant stakeholders, including some journalists.

The executive has also tried to be open with the journalists; to this extent, the President holds quarterly meetings with journalists.

The Public Finance Management Act of 2015 requires the Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development (MoFPED) to release budget information, which has been consistently done.

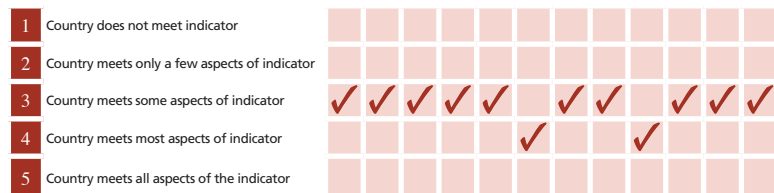
Even though the Government has committed to being an open Government, releasing information is not always proactive. Sometimes the Government releases strategic information and not everything.

People in rural areas and informal settlements struggle to access information because of language barriers. To decentralise and democratise information delivery, districts now have information officers. This is a good and progressive move, but local Government entities “tick boxes” by posting relevant information or leaving booklets at community halls. However, this information is only available in English. The Government cites the lack of funds or budget cuts as the reason for not providing the information in local languages. NGOs working in communities have approached the Government to assist with translating the documents, but it seems the Government is unwilling to partner with them.

‘There are good initiatives in releasing information to the public, but there could be improvements.’

Scores:

Individual scores:



Average score:

3.2

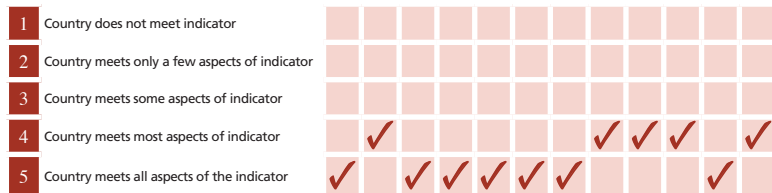
1.11 No person is subject to any sanctions or harm for releasing information on wrongdoing or serious threats to public health, safety or the environment in the honest belief that such information is substantially true.

Media and freedom of expression lobby groups in Uganda (listed below) actively promote freedom of expression. They regularly organise demonstrations and publicise statements and reports to influence public opinion. Panellists shared that the following media freedom, freedom of expression and civil society groups actively lobby for freedom of expression. However, they noted that there is a need for more coordinated lobbying.

- Africa Centre for Media Excellence
- Human Rights Network of Journalists – Uganda
- Africa Institute for Investigative Journalism
- Media Challenge Initiative
- Media Sector Working Group (academics, CSOs, development workers, media council). They formed it voluntarily, and it is increasingly becoming a powerful lobby platform
- Uganda Editors Guild
- National Association of Broadcasters
- Uganda Media Women’s Association
- Freedom of Expression Hub
- Chapter Four Uganda
- International Committee for the Protection of Journalists

Scores:

Individual scores:



Average score: 4.6

Overall Score for Sector 1: 3.0



SECTOR 2:

**Diversity, independence and sustainability
of the media landscape**



2.1 A wide range of sources of information (print, broadcasting, internet, mobile phones) is accessible and affordable to the public.

Uganda has a pluralistic media landscape with a wide range of newspapers, radio and television stations. The online space is also growing with several emerging online start-up content companies.

Print Media

Popular newspapers in the country include:

- *Bukedde* – according to the panellists, this is the most widely circulated newspaper in the country. It is in the local language. Although it is primarily a tabloid, it contains quality news.
- *New Vision* – the Government has 51% shareholding. Its weekend newspapers are the *Saturday Vision* and the *Sunday Vision*.
- *The Daily Monitor* – owned by the Kenyan-based Nation Media Group. Its weekly newspapers are the *Saturday Monitor* and the *Sunday Monitor*.
- *The Red Pepper* – a tabloid newspaper that focuses on sensationalism and scandals.
- *The Weekly Observer* – one of the largest privately-owned papers in the country.
- *Kasangati Times* – a community/local newspaper based in Kampala.
- *The Independent* – private print and online publication based in Kampala.

Most of these newspapers are distributed mainly in Kampala and other major cities. Only *New Vision* and *Daily Monitor* are distributed nationally. The cost of newspapers is primarily affordable for most people. A newspaper costs about 2,000 Ugandan shillings (about 50 US cents). *Bukedde* is the most affordable at about 1,000 Ugandan shillings (about 25 US cents).

Radio stations

There are 309 licensed FM stations in the country. Radio remains the dominant medium of information for women and men nationwide. 98% of households have a radio. Three radio licences are available in Uganda: public, commercial and community. In April 2022, a new list of radios permitted to broadcast in Uganda was issued. Only 62 radio stations have been licensed by the Commission to provide radio broadcasting services in the country.

Television

Uganda has at least 45 television stations, and the largest ones are as follows:

- *Uganda Broadcasting Corporation* (UBS) – State-owned television station
- *NTV* – TV station under the Nation Media Group
- *NBS* – 24-hour multi-content channel owned by Next Media Services
- *Bukedde 1 and 2* – the TV channel of the Vision Group

- *Spark* – the first female TV station in Uganda
- *Salt* – Christian TV station
- *Salaam* – Islamic television network owned by Next Media Services
- *Buganda Broadcasting Services* – the official broadcasting television station of the Buganda Kingdom
- *Urban TV* – an entertainment television channel targeting the youth

Due to digital migration, many TV stations have become national. The migration to digital terrestrial television (DTT) was completed in 2017.

There are several digital channels, including international news, music and film. Some are free, while others are subscription-based. The penetration of TV sets has consistently increased over the years, reaching around 23% of households in 2020. Pay TV has progressively overtaken free reception over the past ten years, driven by the direct-to-home satellite (DTH) and digital terrestrial television offers of MultiChoice and StarTimes that compete for market leadership.¹⁴ There are about 3.2 million TV sets (about 1.6 million subscriptions).

Mobile phone

Uganda has four mobile operators: Africell, Airtel (whose main shareholder is the Indian Bharti Airtel), Uganda Telecom and MTN. The mobile phone penetration is 67%, with 36 million sim cards.¹⁵ Less than half (49%) of Ugandans have access to a mobile phone, with 71% connected through a basic phone.¹⁶ The country has 22 million mobile handsets, but only 12 million are internet-abled. Coverage is growing. 2G networks now reach nearly the entire population, with mobile broadband networks (3G/4G) covering more than 80% of the country. In 2020, the Ministry of ICT released its Fourth Industrial Revolution strategy that prioritises the development of 5G wireless and other emerging technologies.

Mobile phones are affordable, and data prices are competitive, but the digital tax is detrimental. In July 2018, the Government introduced an Over-The-Top (OTT) tax on the use of social media services. The OTT tax, widely known as the ‘social media tax’, requires Ugandans to pay a daily levy of 200 Ugandan shillings (UGX) or 5 US cents to access over 50 platforms, including Facebook, Twitter, and WhatsApp. When this failed to raise the expected tax revenue, this was abandoned and replaced with a new 12% tax on internet data as a part of a new tax package passed under the Excise Duty (Amendment) Act 2021. Panellists fear that this is setting precedence for additional taxes in the digital space.

In 2018, when the OTT was introduced, there was a substantial drop in mobile phone subscriptions of about 5 million users, but the numbers are climbing slowly.

14 Uganda Television Market Report. Dataxis, <https://dataxis.com/product/market-report/television-uganda/>; accessed on 13 March 2023.

15 Uganda Communications Commission (2021) Market Performance Report Q1, https://www.ucc.co.ug/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/UCC_1Q21-MARKET-PERFORMANCE-REPORT_-compressed.pdf; accessed on 13 March 2023.

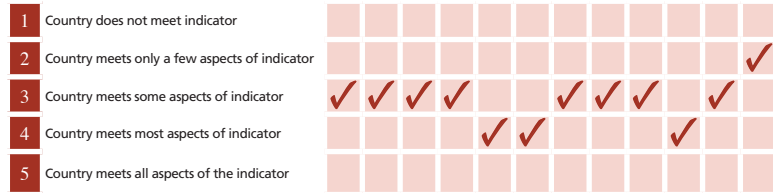
16 After Access (2021) The inside internet story of Africa, Asia and Latin America, <http://afteraccess.net/wp-content/uploads/After-Access-Website-layout-r1.pdf>; accessed on 13 March 2023.

Furthermore, the UCC noted the increased use of Virtual Private Networks (VPNs) to evade paying the internet tax, as only 50% of internet users were compliant.

There are digital inequalities as not everyone can effectively access digital spaces, especially women and people with a disability. Uganda is one of the countries with the most significant gender gap in internet access.

Scores:

Individual scores:



Average score: 3.1

2.2 There is unrestricted, public access to domestic and international media sources.

There is some level of restriction to both domestic and international media sources. The UCC has temporarily closed several media houses over the years. *Busoga One FM* and *Baba FM* in the North were switched off for one week during the 2021 elections over alleged incitement to violence after announcing provisional results for Uganda’s Presidential and Parliamentary elections. In Uganda, the Electoral Commission (Amendment) Act 2020 allows only the electoral body to announce the results.

In 2019, *Salt TV* and *Hope Radio* were temporarily suspended by the UCC for breaching the minimum broadcasting standards. In the same directive, the UCC ordered 13 radio stations and TVs to suspend 39 members of staff. The regulator stated that some stations’ live programmes, breaking news, and leading news bulletins did not comply with the minimum broadcasting standards. In 2021, the UCC switched off *City FM* in Jinja.

Section 31 of the *UCC Act* provides that:

- (a) *person shall not broadcast any programme unless the broadcast or programme complies with Schedule.*

Schedule 4 details the minimum broadcasting standards as follows:

A broadcaster or video operator shall ensure that

- (a) *any programme which is broadcast:*
 - (i) *is not contrary to public morality;*
 - (ii) *does not promote the culture of violence or ethnic prejudice among the public, especially the children and the youth;*

- (iii) in the case of a news broadcast, is free from distortion of facts;
 - (iv) is not likely to create public insecurity or violence; and
 - (v) is in compliance with the existing law.
- (b) programmes that are broadcast are balanced to ensure harmony in such programmes;
 - (c) adult-oriented programmes are appropriately scheduled;
 - (d) where a programme that is broadcast is in respect to a contender for a public office, that each contender is given equal opportunity on such a programme; and
 - (e) where a broadcast relates to national security, the contents of the broadcast are verified before broadcasting.

The stated “minimum broadcasting standards” are overly broad and vague. Therefore, they can be used to suspend any broadcasting station.

Another way domestic information is restricted is when the Government orders certain shows to be stopped before they are aired or even in mid-air. Panellists stated that some radio stations receive phone calls instructing them to prevent a particular show. *The Observer* was raided and robbed in 2018. Many people believed this was due to the paper’s content, which was critical of the Government.

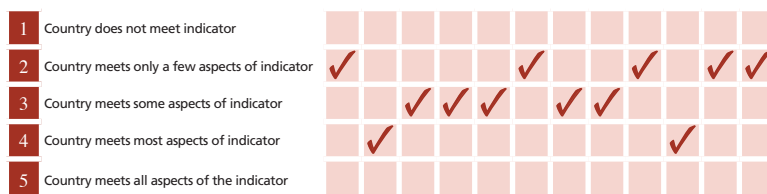
There are no restrictions on access to international media, but the Government promotes international broadcasters over others. Some broadcasters are requested to pay a licence to operate within Uganda and use the country’s digital infrastructure. These broadcasters can only operate in the areas they have paid for. Those without licences, media such as the *BBC* and *Voice of America*, partner with a local media house for content sharing, e.g. the *BBC* has partnered with the *Daily Monitor*.

Foreign journalists are also required to register in Uganda under section 29 (1) of the *Press and Journalist Act 1995*, which states:

No person being an employee of a foreign mass media organisation or working as a freelancer for that mass media shall practise journalism in Uganda unless he or she is in possession of an accreditation card issued by the council.

Scores:

Individual scores:



Average score:

2.8

2.3 The State guarantees the right to establish various forms of independent media, and any media registration is for administrative purposes only.

The registration of print media companies is for administrative purposes only, but this can be a tedious process.

Most print media newspapers have online versions, which must be registered with the UCC separately. The UCC now considers online content producers as media companies. In 2019, the UCC issued a directive which requires “all online data communication service providers including online publishers, online news platforms, online radio and television operators” (UCC, 2019b, para. 6) to seek permission to operate from the UCC. In 2019, the UCC ordered the *Daily Monitor* to shut down its website, accusing the parent company, Monitor Publications Limited, of failing to register and providing an online service illegally.

Communication services, including online platforms and the space they occupy, are regulated under the Uganda Communications Act 2013. Section 5 of this law mandates the Commission to monitor, inspect, license, supervise, control, and regulate all communication services. The Commission is also mandated to set standards and enforce compliance relating to the content.

The UCC requirements for online licencing limit freedom of expression of the media on digital platforms.

The UCC requires the following documents to licence a broadcast and online media company:

- *Company registration certificate*
- *Trade certificate*
- *Corporate structure*
- *Editorial policies*
- *Sustainability plan*

Preparing these documents can take time, and the UCC application process is complex.

‘The whole process can chase away applicants who cannot persist and do not have resilience.’

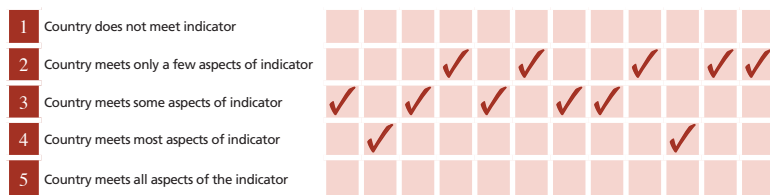
There is a process where a broadcast company is allowed to go on air for three months. UCC monitors the stations for compliance before issuing a substantial license. Certain radio stations have had provisional licences for years and have no substantial licenses.

In its mandate, the Commission revised the licensing framework for the radio broadcasting sector. On 2 June 2020, all existing radio broadcasting licences were withdrawn, and licensees were told to reapply for new licences under the revised framework by 31 July 2020.

'The process was tough and tedious. Some stations have had their licences withdrawn. Of the 309 radio stations, not all of them are now licenced. Some radio stations had their licencing criteria changed. For example, the new rules changed *Mama FM* from being classified as a community broadcaster to becoming a commercial radio station. Thus, the radio station had to pay a lot for the licencing fees.'

Scores:

Individual scores:



Average score:

2.8

2.4 The State promotes a diverse media landscape and takes effective measures to avoid concentration of ownership and monopolies.

Uganda does not have an established regulatory and legal framework that provides for fair market competition and consumer protection to prevent the formation of monopolies and cartels in the markets.

No law in the country deals with cross-media ownership. The UCC Act of 2013 does not clearly outline issues of cross-media ownership. Sections 52 and 53 address issues of fair competition.

Section 52 states:

The Commission shall, in the performance of its functions under this Act, promote, develop and enforce fair competition and equality of treatment among all operators in any business or service relating to communication.

Section 53 prohibits unfair competition:

(1) An operator shall not engage in any activities which have, or are intended or are likely to have the effect of unfairly preventing, restricting or distorting competition concerning any business activity relating to communications services.

- (2) For the purposes of subsection (1) the acts or omissions include:
 - (a) any abuse by an operator, independently or with others, of a dominant position which unfairly excludes or limits competition between the operator and any other party;
 - (b) entering into an agreement or engaging in any concerted practice with any other party, which unfairly prevents, restricts or distorts competition; or
 - (c) effecting anticompetitive changes in the market structure and, in particular, anticompetitive mergers and acquisitions.

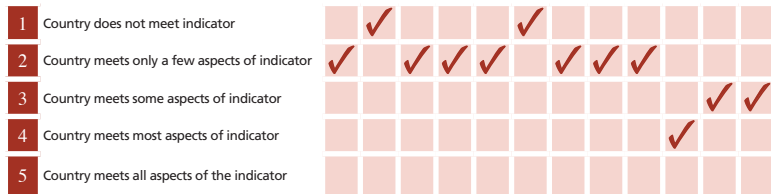
Despite these clauses, there is no protection against cross-media ownership. Media ownership is concentrated. For example, in the broadcasting sector, many radio stations are owned by the same people with political connections. A panellist gave an example of a businessman who bought all radio licences in Kampala County and sold them to individuals.

There is visible cross-ownership in the print media as well. The two biggest media conglomerates – *Vision Group* and *Nation Media Group* (NMG) – own media outlets across multiple platforms. *Vision Group* publishes at least ten newspaper titles and operates three television stations and six radio stations. *NMG* publishes the *Daily Monitor* and its weekend versions and operates *NTV Uganda*. The same people in Government own many radio stations.

There is an upcoming *Consumer Bill* that will investigate issues of competition. The public has been pushing for this law, which is hoped to include cross-ownership issues.

Scores:

Individual scores:



Average score: 2.7

2.5 Transparency of media ownership is guaranteed by law and enforced.

No law compels the UCC and the Press Council to provide media ownership details. However, Article 41 of the Constitution and the Access to Information Act 2005 give citizens the right to access information from a public body. Information on media ownership would therefore fall under this.

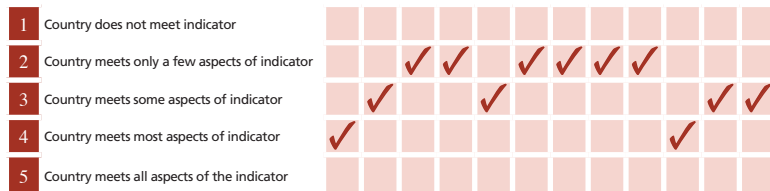
When the UCC advertises applicants for a TV, radio, or online licence, they sometimes provide company details, including the owner. This is done so the public can raise its concerns, if any.

Accessing information on media ownership from the Uganda Registration Services Bureau (URSB) is difficult. For example, one panellist shared an experience that when she learnt that the previous head of the UCC owned a radio station, which is not allowed under the Uganda Registration Services Bureau Act Cap 210, she went to the Company Deeds office to look for information on the details of ownership. She struggled to get this information. She ended up paying for it but also used her privileged position as a lawyer to obtain it.

'There are attempts to conceal media ownership. Most radio stations owned by politicians are not registered in their names. Family members are listed as owners, including a two-year-old in one case.'

Scores:

Individual scores:



Average score:

2.7

2.6 The State promotes the establishment of a diverse media landscape with economically sustainable and independent media outlets.

There is little State support for the growth of the media in Uganda. Like other media organisations across the continent and globally, COVID-19 affected the operations of media houses in the country. The media faced severe economic challenges, including fewer advertisements and declining newspaper sales. During this time, media owners pleaded with the Government to reduce taxes or

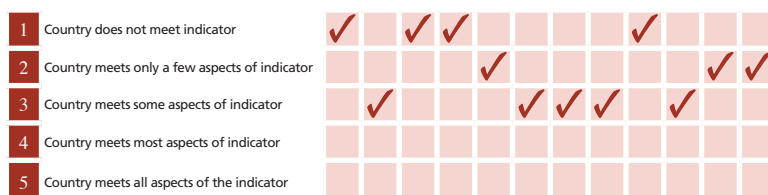
offer support, but the Government did not honour this request. Uganda is a free market economy, so the State is detached from private enterprises.

The new broadcasting licence requirements instituted by UCC also affect the sustainability of radio and TV stations. The licence fees have increased substantially. For example, the application processing fee (one-off) for community radio stations is 4,368,000 Ugandan shillings (about US\$ 1,164) and for a commercial radio station, it is 6,580,000 Ugandan shillings (about US\$ 1,750).¹⁷ Coupled with the difficulties brought by COVID-19, this has posed challenges for community radio stations.

Uganda has little to no State support for community media compared to other countries. ‘Many community media outlets are limping and are not sustainable.’

Scores:

Individual scores:



Average score: 2.3

2.7 The editorial independence of print and online media published by a public authority is protected adequately against undue political interference.

‘There is a lot of interference in the State media. There is no doubt that the State interferes in editorial issues.’

During elections, public media outlets owned by the Government, such as newspapers in the *Vision Group* and the State broadcasters *UBC*, are often used to skew news content in favour of the Government. During the last elections in 2021, the *New Vision* and *UBC* gave incumbent President Museveni disproportionately higher coverage than opposition candidates. The *New Vision* is an independently listed company, but the Government has 51% shareholding.

¹⁷ See the Uganda Communication (Fees and Fines) Regulations 2019, <https://www.ucc.co.ug/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Fees-and-fines-Regulations-2019.pdf>, accessed on 27 November 2022, as well as THE UGANDA COMMUNICATIONS (FEES AND FINES) (AMENDMENT) (NO.2) REGULATIONS, 2020, <https://www.ucc.co.ug/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Fees-and-Fines-Amendment-no.2-Regulations-2020.pdf>, accessed on 27 November 2022; and THE UGANDA COMMUNICATIONS (FEES AND FINES) (AMENDMENT) REGULATIONS, 2020, <https://www.ucc.co.ug/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Fees-and-Fines-Amendment-Regulations-2020.pdf>, accessed on 27 November 2022.

'The chief editor of the *New Vision* is the President. The President is interested in the headlines of the newspapers. As an editor, you must think like the President and determine the appropriate headlines. Editors need to be smart in how they manage headlines.'

Editorial interference goes deep in the country. A journalist will write a story, but the editor will not release it until State House sends their version.

One panellist said that editorial interference in state-owned newspapers even affects the visual content. 'Page 3 is always assigned to the President and the First Family. If the President's pictures are not on page 1, then they are on page 3. Page 5 is kept for the First Lady.'

Another manifestation of interference is when editors are summoned to State House to be questioned about specific stories. 'They can spend the whole day at these meetings.'

One of the *Daily Monitor* shareholders owns the dam that distributes the most expensive electricity in the country. The *Daily Monitor* has bravely published stories against its own shareholder, criticising the dam venture. 'This is to show the difference between the State and the private media.'

Scores:

Individual scores:

1	Country does not meet indicator		✓				✓			✓					
2	Country meets only a few aspects of indicator			✓	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓
3	Country meets some aspects of indicator														
4	Country meets most aspects of indicator														
5	Country meets all aspects of the indicator	✓													

Average score:

1.9

2.8 The State allocates funds for public advertising in a transparent manner and refrains from using its power over the placement of such advertising as a means to interfere with editorial content.

The Ugandan Government is a key player in the advertising space. In 2019, the Government introduced a centralised media buying strategy through the Ministry of ICT. This new strategy has implications for the editorial independence of the media as they now straddle a thin line between editorial independence and pandering to the Government for ad revenue. There is also the danger that the Government will leverage the centralised media buying system and direct all ad spend to media houses that are not critical of its policies.

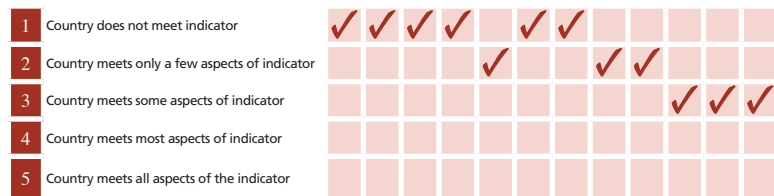
Evidence shows that the Government can use its advertising power to control the media. ‘At one point, the Government asked the *Weekly Observer* to tone down its critical content. The newspaper is known for writing in-depth feature stories. The Government used the trick of buying lots of space in the newspaper to ensure that the content would be limited.’

Individuals in Government also instruct the media to cover the Government positively if they want to get ad spend. ‘In certain cases, 40% of the ad spend would go the Vision and 60% to the rest. Media houses must pitch what stories they want to write about the Government to get the ad spend.’

The centralisation of ad spend in the media by the Government threatens to compromise critical reporting of the Government, as media houses will be fearful of losing out on the Government’s advertising revenue, especially in a struggling economy with dwindling budgets.

Scores:

Individual scores:



Average score: 1.7

2.9 The size of the advertising market can support a diversity of media outlets.

Uganda has many media outlets chasing a small advertising base. Dominant corporate advertisers are in the beverage and telecommunication sectors. Panellists estimated that ad spend in Uganda amounts to about 230 billion Ugandan shillings (about US\$ 61 million). However, most of this is concentrated in the urban national TV and newspapers.

‘MTN will pay NTV maybe about 15 million Ugandan shillings (about US\$ 4,000) for a 5-second advert, yet for a community radio, they may pay 130,000 Ugandan shillings (almost US\$ 35) for a 3-minute slot. The 130,000 shillings is not standard. If you bargain a little, they might increase the amount. But for the national broadcasters, the 15 million shillings is a standard fee.’

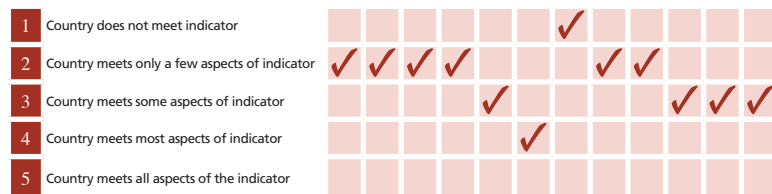
The competition for the limited ad spend has also been made worse by the growth of digital media platforms. This has disrupted the flow of advertising revenues to legacy media as the new entrants tap into the advertising market share.

Advertisers also try to influence editorial content. In 2019, four *MTN* managers, including the CEO, were deported from Uganda as the Government pressured *MTN* to list on the local stock exchange and renegotiate its operating licence after 20 years. *MTN* was clear that how the stories were carried out in the media affected the advertising to these media houses.

Large corporate companies also tend to invite corrupt editors for elaborate breakfasts or dinners to pave the way for editorial intervention as and when necessary.

Scores:

Individual scores:



Average score:

2.4

2.10 Media fairly represent the voices of society as a whole, including those of all genders, minorities and marginalised groups.

‘There is media pluralism, but little diversity of voices.’

Uganda has media pluralism with an assorted mix of private, public and community media, ideally enabling space for an array of opinions, but this is not always the case.

The broadcast media, especially radio, primarily focuses on entertainment rather than public interest programming. The media cannot cover all voices. Most media stories are urban-centred. Kampala is highlighted more than other areas. English and Luganda are primarily used in the media. This means that marginalised communities and voices are side-lined.

‘Those with power and agency are given a voice.’

Regarding women’s representation in the media, the voices and views of prominent women in urban areas tend to be favoured over the voices of young women, especially those on the margins. A study conducted by one of the panellists on women’s media representation, engagement and interaction found that women’s visibility and voice are limited, especially in broadcast media. Thus, women cannot fully participate in public life deliberations.

Community radio is ideally placed to cover the voices left out of mainstream media. However, many community radios are moving away from their mandate and towards trending and popular content rather than community issues. In most community radio stations, there is also little diversity of voices. The same sources are used across community radio stations, with stories “copied and pasted”.

‘There is not much thinking about content creation to factor in diversity. Most community radio stations are going for easy content – music, entertainment, etc. There is no content strategy. This could be due to apathy – low salaries, poor working conditions and lack of resources. Who has time to think of content strategy in such a situation? There are very few community media doing good journalism.’

Many rural and semi-urban communities in Uganda have Community Audio Towers (CATs), commonly known as Bizindalo. CATs are small media platforms that use horn speakers hoisted on a long pole, an amplifier and a microphone to communicate daily village events. They are critical in disseminating important messages on Government programmes and other development issues. During COVID-19, they shared essential information on containment protocols and vaccination.

In 2017, the UCC began dismantling the CATs for allegedly operating in contravention of the law and causing noise pollution. UCC explained that community radios were working in violation of the UCC Act 2013, which prohibits persons from installing or operating radios, television or broadcasting apparatus without a license from the UCC.

The media do not adequately cover the voice of other marginalised groups, such as people living with disabilities and the LGBTQIA+ community. Many Ugandan journalists have little knowledge of accurate disability reporting and often use incorrect language and terminologies. LGBTQIA+ issues are hardly covered in mainstream media, but when there is coverage, it is primarily negative and sensationalist. Homosexuality is illegal in Uganda under a colonial-era law, the Penal Code 1950, that criminalises same-sex acts as “against the order of nature”. LGBTQIA+ people face widespread discrimination,¹⁸ so most media avoid stories about sexual orientation.

There is little religious diversity in the media. Christianity dominates many media stories at the expense of other religions, especially Islam and African religions. When religious issues are covered in the media, they are mainly negative in tone. ‘Concentration is placed when there is controversy in religious institutions.’ Panellists also noted, though, that there is a failure by religious leaders to communicate effectively to the media due to a lack of media relations skills.

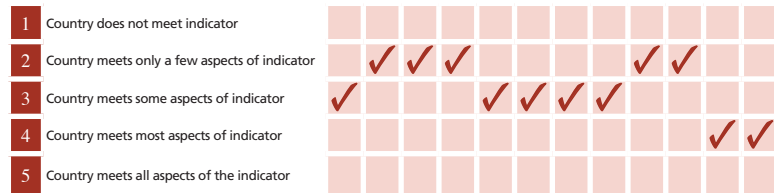
18 In May 2021, the Ugandan Parliament passed the Sexual Offences Bill, further criminalising same-sex sexual activity and sex work. The President did not sign the bill, pointing out that it duplicates offences already included in the Penal Code, see <https://www.humandignitytrust.org/country-profile/uganda/>, accessed on 13 March 2023. On 20 December 2013, an Anti-Homosexuality Act was passed by Parliament and signed by the President on 24 February 2014, but on 1 August 2014 ruled invalid on procedural grounds by the Constitutional Court. On 21 March 2023, a new Anti-Homosexuality Bill was passed by Parliament. After being returned to Parliament by the President, it was passed a second time by Parliament on 2 May 2023. At the time of this report, the President had not yet assented to it.

Diverse media coverage is improving in the large legacy media. For example, the *Nation Media Group* is doing well. The *Daily Monitor* is no longer politics-heavy as it used to be. They have increased stories on socio-economic issues (such as housing, services, health, and the economy). In the last election in 2021, the *Daily Monitor* also deliberately increased the coverage of women politicians and voters. The newspaper worked with the media monitoring unit of the *African Centre for Media Excellence* (ACME). As a result, there was an increase in women's voices.

Good editorial policies also play a part in increasing media diversity. The *New Vision* has adopted a vox pop policy where community voices are required as much as possible in each story. Each Wednesday, the paper has a HerVision section highlighting women's stories. On Thursday, the paper focuses on health; on Friday, it focuses on another socioeconomic aspect. *Uganda Radio Network* (URN), an independent agency that serves the Ugandan media with news articles, magazine programs, documentaries and audio content, also requires the segregation of voices according to gender, youth and age. As a result, many radio stations have become deliberate in their coverage of issues to include diverse voices.

Scores:

Individual scores:



Average score: 2.7

Overall Score for Sector 2: 2.4



SECTOR 3:

**Legislation and regulation of broadcasting
and internet**



3.1 The body that regulates broadcasting, telecommunications, and internet infrastructure is independent, appointed transparently, and protected by law against political or commercial interference.

The Uganda Communications Act of 2013 establishes the *Uganda Communications Commission* (UCC). Section 8 provides for the independence of the UCC in executing its mandate. However, this independence is taken away by a clawback clause in section 7 that provides that the UCC must obey the policy guidelines from the Information Minister in performing its functions. Sections 7 and 8 states:

7. *Powers of the Minister.*

- (1) *The Minister may, in writing, give policy guidelines to the Commission regarding the performance of its functions.*
- (2) *The Commission shall comply with the policy guidelines given by the Minister under this section.*

8. *Independence of the Commission.*

Subject to this Act, the Commission shall exercise its functions independently of any person or body.

The independence of the UCC is further eroded by section 93(1) of the UCC Act, in which the Minister of ICT and National Guidance can make regulations governing the broadcasting sector in consultation with the UCC, but without the approval of Parliament. In the past, the appointment of the board had to be approved by Parliament. The amended 2017 law removed the Parliamentary oversight requirement. Now the Minister of ICT handpicks the board with no transparency.

The Board is a political arm of the Government. Panellists feel that although it looks diverse on paper, it is not. For instance, there is no journalist or media practitioner representation on the current board. Hence, there is little understanding of the UCC of the operations of the media. The UCC seems to focus more on telecommunications as this sector is seen as a 'cash cow'.

The Executive has practically usurped the powers of the Board, which seem to be non-functional. The Board minutes are not accessible, so it is difficult to know how it functions. 'There is a lot of vagueness in how the UCC operates.'

There is also political interference in the appointment of the UCC Executive Team. The current acting executive director, Irene Kaggwa Sewankambo, has been acting for three years. The former ICT Minister, Nyombi Thembo, now heads the Industry Affairs and Content Development at the UCC.

‘The Executive Director, like most people on the executive, is a technical person. The position is a political one.’

Section 60 provides for establishing a Uganda Communications Tribunal to be headed by a judge and two other persons appointed by the President. The mandate and powers of the Uganda Communications Tribunal are provided for in sections 64 and 65 of the UCC Act. The terms to set up the Tribunal are clear, but it has not been set up yet, possibly because establishing this body is not in the interest of the UCC.

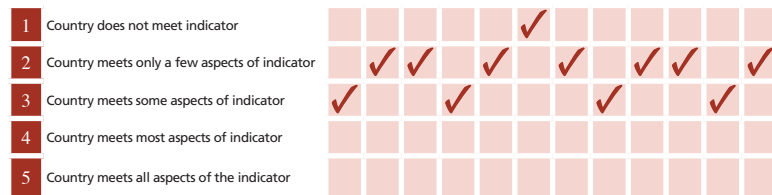
The lack of a tribunal has led the UCC to make many arbitrary directions to broadcasters, which can only be challenged by the Uganda Communications Tribunal, which is non-operational. Matters filed in court challenging the decisions of the UCC or the Minister have been dismissed on the premise that the dispute should have been filed at the Uganda Communications Tribunal. This has created a dilemma.

The executive members have constituted themselves as the technical team, and all power is vested with them. The Media Council is ineffective because the UCC has taken over its power. This means that the UCC is also in charge of content regulation. The Media Council has remained a peripheral and weak institution. The UCC also has the power to order telecom companies to shut down the internet, as has been the case in the past. The law protects the UCC from the telecoms who have no say.

“The process of granting licences appears transparent on paper, but even if you meet the requirements, it does not guarantee you will get the license.”

Scores:

Individual scores:



Average score:

2.3

3.2 The State/Public broadcaster is accountable to the public and protected against political or commercial interference, governed by a board representative of society at large and selected in an independent, open and transparent manner.

The Uganda Broadcasting Corporation Act of 2005 establishes the Uganda Broadcasting Corporation (UBC) as Uganda's national public broadcaster. The government owns and controls the UBC, which merged Radio Uganda and Uganda Television under the UBC Act. The Act was envisioned to transform the State broadcaster into "a viable, independent, professionally-run public broadcaster accountable to the public to ensure efficiency and quality programming". The Act neither defines public broadcasting nor identifies UBC explicitly as a public broadcaster.

UBC is 100% owned, but not 100% funded, by the Government.

UBC is governed by a board of directors appointed by the Minister of ICT and National Guidance. Section 7(2) of the Act states:

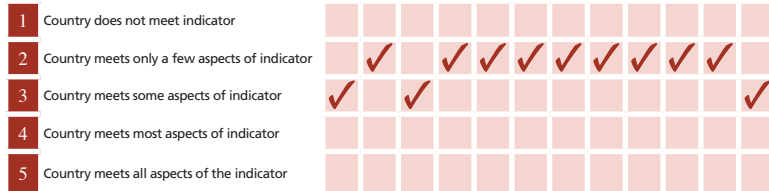
The Directors to serve on the Board shall be appointed by the Minister from prominent Ugandans of proven integrity by virtue of their qualifications, expertise and experience in broadcasting, technology, media law, business management, finance, and journalism.

The Act is silent on the appointment process, but in practice, the Minister picks people to sit on the Board and sends his nomination/s to the Cabinet. The Cabinet does not typically refuse the Minister's choices. The Board is announced after the Cabinet presentation. There is no public involvement in the appointment of the Board. Based on the UBC Act, the Board is accountable to the Minister, with little accountability to the people.

As articulated in section 7(2) above, the board requires diverse people. The independence of the Board is not guaranteed by law, and as such, some political players have served on the Board. At one time, three former MPs were incorporated into the Board. The current Executive Director is a former journalist and serves as the Board's technical person. Although the law does not provide for gender inclusion, the current Board has three women.

Scores:

Individual scores:



Average score:

2.3

3.3 Public service broadcast media are adequately funded in a manner that protects them from political interference through the allocation of budgets and from commercial pressure.

According to Section 14(1) of the UBC Act, the funds of the Corporation shall consist of:

- any grant of a capital nature from the Government;
- any loan from the Government, organizations or any person;
- any moneys that may become payable to the Corporation in the discharge of its functions and commercial activities;
- donations that may be made to the Corporation;
- television viewing licence fees and advertising revenue.

The Government does not supply adequate funding, so the UBC relies on commercial funding, especially for advertising and renting the signal frequencies.

In 2016, a seven-member committee was tasked with investigating the national broadcaster. The UBC review committee made several recommendations, which included a change in the management, an amendment of the UBC Act, and the creation of a new financing mechanism to run the public broadcaster sustainably. This was followed by the establishment of the UBC revamp team by the then Minister of ICT, Frank Tumwebaze, in 2018. When UBC was restructured, the Government promised to pay staff at the corporation and clear the pension debt that had accumulated for years.

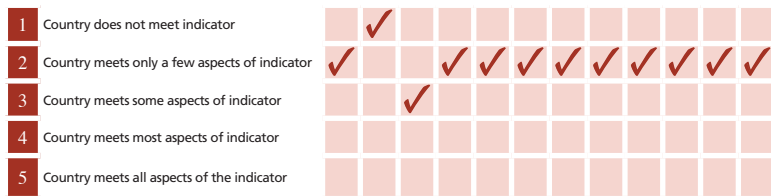
Despite these promises of resources, funding the broadcaster has been challenging. After the 2018 restructuring, the Government offered to provide 22 billion Ugandan shillings (almost US\$ 6 million) annually, even though the broadcaster requires 36 billion Ugandan shillings (US\$ 9.6 million). In 2019, only 12 billion Ugandan shillings (US\$ 3.2 million) were provided, and in 2020 only 4 billion Ugandan shillings (US\$ 1.07 million). In 2021, it rose to 10 billion

Ugandan shillings (US\$ 2,7 million). In 2021, the then Minister of ICT, Judith Nabakooba, decried a lack of funding for the broadcaster. The Parliamentary Committee on ICT summoned the Ministry of Finance over the failure to provide funding to UBC.

The UBC has mentioned introducing a tax to be paid by the public, but the Government has not been able to implement this. As a result of these funding challenges, the broadcaster mainly depends on advertising. UBC generates about 85% of its revenue from advertising. Despite the heavy dependence on advertising, advertisers do not seem to have a discernible influence on editorial policy.

Scores:

Individual scores:



Average score: 1.9

3.4 The editorial independence of public service broadcast media from political influence is guaranteed by law and practised to ensure balanced and fair coverage of news and current affairs.

Section 22 of the UBC Act 2005 specifies seven provisions that form the foundation of the broadcaster’s editorial policy. In carrying out its functions under this Act, the Board shall, in particular, have as its editorial policy to:

- (a) establish effective machinery for a wide coverage of events all-over the world and Uganda in particular;
- (b) voice public opinion and criticism of a given public policy in a fair and objective manner;
- (c) uphold the integrity of the Republic of Uganda and promote harmonious relationships among its people, its neighbours and the world at large;
- (d) collect, process, analyse and propagate news and comment truthfully, honestly, and fairly without jeopardizing peace and harmony in the country;

- (e) respect and uphold the sovereignty and unity of Uganda and to come out firmly on the side of Uganda in matters affecting such sovereignty and unity without affecting the truth, which must at all times be the guiding line and governing principle of the television and radio services;
- (f) ensure that the Corporation does not broadcast any material, which is indecent, obscene or offensive to public morals religious convictions or is likely to prejudice the safety of the State or public order between sections of the population; and
- (g) ensure that the Corporation’s broadcasting is in line with the code of conduct prescribed by the Broadcasting Council.

These sections do not speak of the editorial independence of the broadcaster. Section 5(h) of the UBC Act somewhat guarantees editorial independence, but the word “responsible” muddles this independence. The section states:

The functions of the Corporation shall be to:

- (h) maintain responsible editorial independence and set national broadcasting standards through exemplary performance.

The Minister does not overtly interfere in programming and editorial independence. But journalists sometimes receive phone calls “from above” to either remove specific panellists or amend programmes. An example is pressure to remove outspoken and critical UBC panellist Sarah Bireete of the Centre for Constitutional Governance.

One panellist stated that it should be noted that historically, *UTV* and *Uganda Radio* were used as geo-political control tools. When these two entities merged to become UBC, the corporation continued in the same vein. Therefore, there is historical continuity in the way the UBC operates.

Scores:

Individual scores:

1	Country does not meet indicator																			
2	Country meets only a few aspects of indicator	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
3	Country meets some aspects of indicator			✓																
4	Country meets most aspects of indicator																			
5	Country meets all aspects of the indicator																			

Average score:

2.1

3.5 Private broadcasters make an effort to offer a minimum of quality public interest programming.

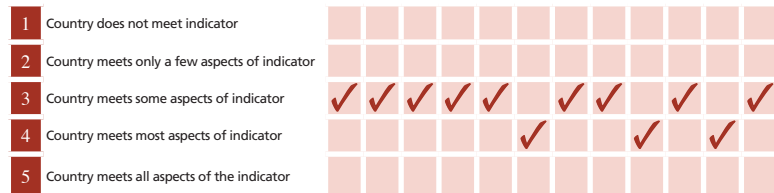
The Broadcasting Policy defines local content as “Content which recognises the cultural and linguistic diversity of Uganda carrying themes of relevance to the local audience and produced under Ugandan’s creative control”. In 2013, the UCC set a local content quota for all free-to-air television broadcasters in Uganda. As local content, a broadcaster was required to achieve a minimum of 70% of its programming during prime time (6 to 11 pm). Of the 70% of content required by UCC, 50% must feature drama, comedy and reality show programs. 10% will be reserved for local documentary programs, 5% for sports and 5% for children’s programs.¹⁹

The UCC also directed that all broadcasters broadcast national events involving the President. Even if a private broadcaster has a paid programme lined up, when the President is speaking, or some important national event occurs, all broadcasters must drop their programmes to cover it.

Panellists noted a diversity of programming on private broadcasting stations, which carry a reasonable amount of public interest programming. The stations provide Ugandan telenovelas, entertainment programmes, religious programmes, children’s programmes, paid development programmes, and community programmes considering people’s voices in marginalised communities. There have been great improvements since the 2016 AMB, especially in the big TV stations such as *NTV* and *NBS*.

Scores:

Individual scores:



Average score: **3.3**

¹⁹ For details, see Measuring Broadcasting Local Content Quota at <https://uccinfoblog.wordpress.com/2019/04/15/measuring-broadcasting-local-content-quota/>; accessed on 7 March 2023.

3.6 The State promotes the establishment of independent community broadcasters who deliver content relevant to the interests of their communities.

Section 4.4 of the Broadcasting Policy provides for community broadcasting. According to the policy, community broadcasting:

is for, by and about specific geographical communities or communities of interest, whose ownership and management is representative of those communities, which pursues a social development agenda and which is not-for-profit.

The policy states that the Government should “ensure that the necessary legal framework is put in place” and “provide technical and other support for its establishment and operation”.

The UCC Act 2013 does not specifically recognise the distinct characteristics of community broadcasting, which falls under the same licensing regime and requirements as commercial broadcasting. Community broadcasters in urban areas, such as *Mama FM* in Kampala, must pay the same license fees as commercial stations in this area.

There is little Government support for community broadcasting. ‘There are more impediments than support.’ For example, the new licensing conditions for broadcasting make it difficult for many community broadcasters. Also, banning the community audio towers (Bizindalo) shows that the Government has little regard for the importance of community voices.

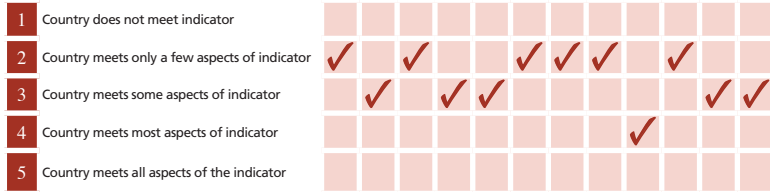
Community radio is widely distributed across the country. Half of the radio stations in the country define themselves as a community. Although many radio stations meet the majority of the criteria of community radio, most are owned by individual people, not the community.

The quality of programming in community radio stations differs across the spectrum. The bigger community radio stations have more resources and therefore offer better quality than the smaller stations. Panellists agreed that content diversity is there in some respects.

In 2003, community radio stations came together and formed the Community Media Network Uganda (COMNETU) to promote the growth of community media. To date, the network has 16 members.

Scores:

Individual scores:



Average score: 2.6

3.7 The State has promulgated laws and policies that ensure universal, equitable, affordable and meaningful access to the internet.

Uganda has several laws and policies governing ICT, as follows:

- Uganda Communications Act 2013
- Electronic Transactions Act 2011
- Electronic Signatures Act 2011
- Computer Misuse Act 2011
- Regulation of Interception of Communications Act 2010
- National Information Technology Authority Act 2009
- Access to Information Act 2005
- Anti-Terrorism Act 2002
- Data Protection and Privacy Act 2019
- The policies are:
- The National ICT Policy 2013
- Rural Communications Development Fund 2015
- National Broadband Policy 2018
- National Electronic Government Policy Framework 2010

In 2020, the Government also developed the National 4IR Strategy, which prioritises the development of fifth-generation (5G) wireless and other emerging technologies. At the moment, the majority of users in the country are covered by 4G. MTN Uganda, partnering with the Chinese telecom firm ZTE, has started rolling out 5G technology. Other private players, such as Google and Facebook, are also working on projects to improve internet coverage in the country.

While laws and policies support the distribution and access of ICTs, implementation from different Government departments is low. Under the Rural Communication Service Fund, the State must provide access in rural areas, but the support is

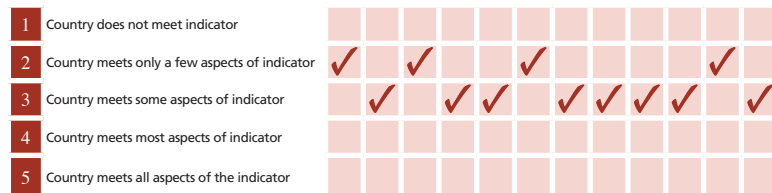
limited, and access is patchy. Although the Government has installed computers in rural areas, other infrastructural impediments limit the use of these computers (e.g. electricity and digital literacy).

The requirement for the Government to provide universal access to ICTs is in section 5(m) of the UCC Act, which states that one of the functions of the UCC is “to improve communications services generally and to ensure equitable distribution of services throughout the country”. Sections 57-59 of the Act also speak of access. The National Broadband Policy (2018) also spells out the country’s desire to increase digital inclusion, improve broadband affordability, and increase access to broadband for all Ugandans.

Affordability issues also impede meaningful access to the internet. While the internet’s cost has decreased, data costs remain unaffordable for many Ugandans. A 2019 survey shows Ugandans are paying some of the highest rates for mobile data in East Africa. Ugandans pay, on average, 17,231 shillings (US\$ 4,60) for 1GB of data.²⁰ The introduction of the 12% tax on internet data as a part of a new tax package passed under the Excise Duty (Amendment) Act, 2021 is putting more strain on internet access.

Scores:

Individual scores:



Average score:

2.7

3.8 The State protects everyone’s right to privacy and the confidentiality of their communications and refrains from indiscriminate and untargeted collecting, storing, analysing or sharing of such communications.

In 2019, the Ugandan Government adopted the Data Protection and Privacy Act. In March 2021, new regulations were promulgated to implement the Act. The Act aims to protect individuals and their data by regulating the processing of

²⁰ Ugandans paying highest for mobile data in E. Africa – survey. The Daily Monitor, 21 September 2019, updated 14 September 2020, <https://www.monitor.co.ug/uganda/news/national/ugandans-paying-highest-for-mobile-data-in-e-africa-survey-1849040>, accessed on 7 March 2023.

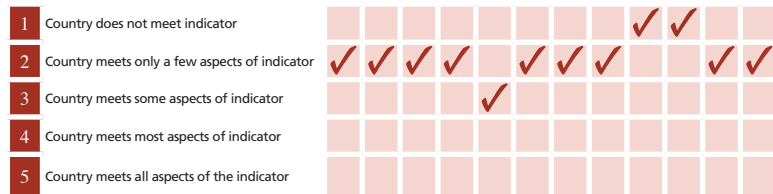
personal information by State and non-state actors within and outside Uganda. The right to privacy is also enshrined in the Uganda Constitution 1995.

The Data Protection and Privacy Act is a progressive law. It supports privacy as a fundamental human right for Ugandans. There are, however, questions of how data is collected, analysed and stored and by whom. Also, the privacy rights in the Act are taken away by the Regulation of Interception of Communications Act 2010 (RICA), which provides “for the lawful interception and monitoring of certain communications in the course of their transmission through a telecommunication, postal or any other related service or system in Uganda”. RICA also allows the Security Minister to request access to personal communications based on national security concerns through a High Court order.

Panellists shared that there is a perception among many journalists and human rights activists that they are under surveillance.

Scores:

Individual scores:



Average score: 1.9

3.9 The State upholds the right of individuals to seek, receive and impart information through digital technologies. It does not remove, block or filter any content unless such interference is compatible with international human rights laws and standards.

Since the 2016 AMB, internet freedom declined significantly as the Government restricted internet connectivity by blocking social media platforms and using circumvention tools.

The Government also sought to control online content through various means. In the run-up to the 2016 elections, the Government ordered the shutdown of Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, and mobile money services for four days. In early January 2021, the Government restricted access to Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, WhatsApp, Telegram, and other social media platforms. This was followed by an internet shutdown when the UCC ordered internet service providers to

SECTOR 4:

Quality of media, working conditions and safety of journalists

4.1 The standard of reporting follows the basic principles of accuracy and fairness.

‘There is some level of accuracy and fairness in the print media, but not so much in broadcasting and online media.’

One panellist who has been a judge for five years on the Africa Centre for Media Excellence (ACME) media awards stated that she had seen a gradual improvement in the reporting standard, especially in the print media. It is felt that awards play some part in helping improve reporting standards.

Several factors impact the quality of reporting, chief of which are skills and resources within newsrooms, low wages, and intra-newsroom competition where there is pressure to “break the story”. The latter affects freelance journalists more as they get paid per story. More well-resourced newsrooms have better standards of reporting. For example, the *Nation Group* has a public editor responsible for supervising the implementation of proper journalism ethics. The *Nation* has strict rules to ensure that stories are accurate.

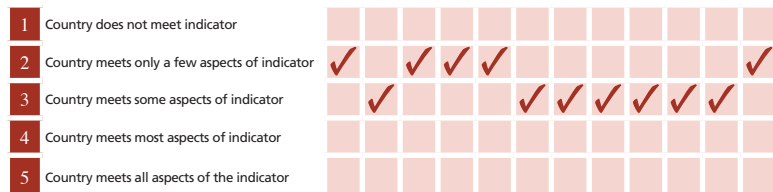
However, reporting is much less meticulous on the online and radio landscape, than in print media – because competition for audiences is much fiercer in the audio-visual media due to the sheer number of outlets. Television fares much better than radio, especially in large TV companies such as *NTV*, *UBC* and *NBS*, where there is rich reporting. Fake news is prevalent on many online media platforms.

News stories are generally well-sourced, but fewer media sources exist during elections. The *Ugandan Media Coverage of the 2021 Elections* report by ACME states that many stories were single-sourced, which was more pronounced on the radio. There is also gender disparity in sourcing, with women continuing to be less sourced than men across many stories.

Newspapers do publish apologies for inaccurate stories, but this is not always done effectively. ‘A screaming headline on page 1 that is inaccurate will end up on page 10 as a correction.’ As a result of this tendency, some people buy media space to make corrections on stories that carry inaccurate information. Ieces should be substantiated by reported facts and provide comments fairly.

Scores:

Individual scores:



Average score: 2.6

4.2 The media follow voluntary comprehensive codes of professional standards, which are enforced by independent bodies that deal with complaints from the public.

There is no self-regulation of the media in Uganda. The Uganda Media Council (UMC) is a State entity. There were attempts in 2008 to set up an independent media council, but this did not succeed as the stakeholders had little buy-in. Panellists believed that the media owners, both in the private and State media, worked hard to ensure this council failed because 'its success would have meant the empowering of journalists and paying them better salaries'. For example, in Kenya, journalists are very powerful because of the robust media council and journalist bodies existing in that country.

The Uganda Editors Guild, an umbrella body that brings together editors, senior journalists, and journalism scholars, is increasingly critical in uniting journalists without an independent media council.

The Uganda Media Council is generally well-functioning and respected. It receives complaints from the public, which are dealt with fairly. The current leadership is forward-looking. However, the board is problematic as it is not fully constituted. Two members on the board represent the National Institute of Journalists of Uganda (NIJU), which exists on paper but not in practice. The Press and Journalist Act, 1995 provides for the formation of a National Institute of Journalists of Uganda (NIJU) which would facilitate engagement among journalists.

Despite these shortcomings, the UMC is working to fulfil its mandate. 'In a sense, the UMC is capable but not effective.'

Scores:

Individual scores:

1	Country does not meet indicator		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
2	Country meets only a few aspects of indicator	✓				✓									
3	Country meets some aspects of indicator														
4	Country meets most aspects of indicator														
5	Country meets all aspects of the indicator														

Average score:

1.2

4.3 Salary levels and general working conditions, including safety, for journalists and other media practitioners are adequate.

Monthly salaries for journalists and media practitioners in Uganda are very low. Below are the general levels in most newsrooms:

Entry level in State media:

- Television 800,000 Ugandan shillings (US\$ 213)
- Radio 600,000 Ugandan shillings (US\$ 160)
- Print media – ranging from 200,000 to 1,300,000 Ugandan shillings (US\$ 53 – US\$ 346)

Entry level in the private media:

- Print media 1.5 million Ugandan shillings (US\$ 400)
- Television 1 million Ugandan shillings (US\$ 266)

Salaries of senior staff (senior reporters and above) differ across newsrooms and depend on contractual agreements.

Even though salary levels in the mainstream media are low, most media workers prefer short-term contracts to avoid paying these salaries.

In the community radio sector, freelancers get paid between 3,000 to 10,000 Ugandan shillings (US\$ 0.75 - US\$ 2.50). Staff on contracts/salary get approximately 200,000 to 500,000 Ugandan shillings (US\$ 50 - US\$ 125) per month. Volunteers do not earn salaries but get transport or lunch money.

General working conditions in most newsrooms are difficult. Journalists in bigger media houses get a relatively good salary but work long hours. Many journalists are paid by article, so they push the hours. People work seven days a week (12 to 14 hours daily).

'Journalists work so hard for basically peanuts with little benefits and poor compensation.'

There is often no transport for early morning and late shifts. Many media houses do not provide pension, medical and funeral cover.

Most media houses also do not have a budget for the safety of journalists. There is very little support for journalists who get attacked during the coverage of stories. But this also depends on the media house. For example, *New Vision* and the *Nation Media Group* have a safety policy for journalists and camera people. In addition, the media practitioners working in these companies receive treatment, medical cover and legal support when attacked. The UBC human

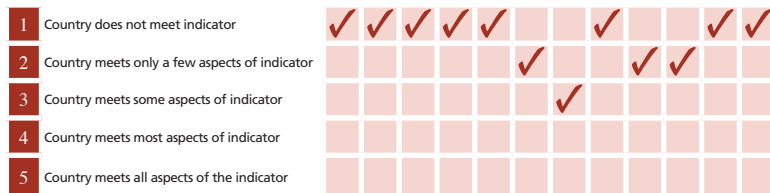
resources policy also covers medical and safety cover. However, safety gear is very scarce for all journalists, making covering protests and riots challenging and dangerous. Journalists have learnt to practice solidarity regardless of whether one is from the private or State media. Those with safety gear protect those without.

Ugandan media do not offer therapy for work-related stresses (e.g. from covering traumatic events, being arrested or tortured). Even big media houses do not provide therapy.

Digital safety software is often in bigger media houses but needs attention.

Scores:

Individual scores:



Average score:

1.4

4.4 Media cover the full spectrum of economic, cultural, political, environmental, social, national, and local perspectives and conduct investigative stories

Most big media houses have beats on health, agriculture, economics, politics and gender. The UBC broadcasts in 27 languages and covers a variety of topics. Recently, the broadcaster set up a radio station in a remote marginalised community to cover the community concerns. This was done to complement the community radio stations.

Politics still take centre stage across all media platforms, followed by the economy. However, politics from Kampala dominate over national politics. Entertainment news is also significant and is used to attract a younger audience. Generally, cultural issues are covered well. Cultural institutions have their own media, e.g. the Buganda Kingdom.

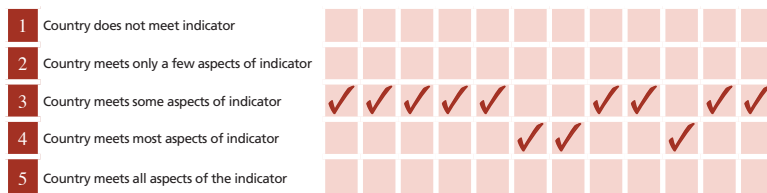
Social media also influence content. The media often pick up several issues on social media and run stories that provide context and details. The media make sure to fact-check the stories. Legacy media has accepted that they do not break the news.

Gender mainstreaming in news stories remains challenging, although there have been improvements since the last AMB. The Uganda Media Women’s Association has stated that gender-mainstreamed and gender-sensitive stories are few. Even though most Ugandans are women, their visibility in media content is low. The little coverage that women attract is often stereotyped, portraying them in traditional reproductive and caregiving roles.

It is tough to get women as sources and contributors because of cultural issues related to the fear of harassment.

Scores:

Individual scores:



Average score: 3.3

4.5 The State guarantees the safety of journalists and other media practitioners and does not arrest and detain them arbitrarily or engage in attacks, threats or unlawful surveillance.

There is undoubtedly surveillance of journalists, as stated in Indicator 3.8.

Attacks on journalists in the country have intensified. In February 2021, the military police assaulted at least ten journalists covering Uganda’s opposition leader Robert Kyagulanyi (Bobi Wine), when he delivered a petition to the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in Kampala’s Kololo. His petition protested against human rights abuses and abductions of his supporters in the run-up to and after January’s contested Presidential election. A *Daily Monitor* journalist, Irene Abalo, ended up in a wheelchair as a direct result of the assault. At the time of this AMB, the journalist was still using crutches.

‘After the beatings, there was a reaction from the army trying to be conciliatory. This was the first time for them to do that.’

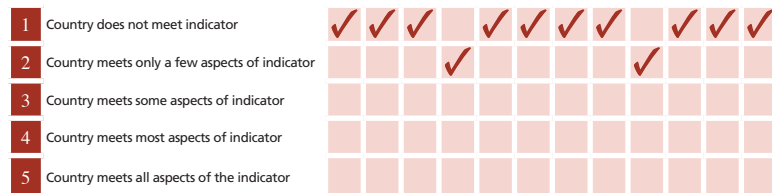
Journalists were also repeatedly attacked during other events. For instance, the police – while enforcing a night-time curfew to combat a surge in COVID-19 cases – harassed and attacked journalists. During the 2021 elections, several journalists were attacked. The African Institute for Investigative Journalism (AIJ) released a documentary, *Targeted*, highlighting the attacks on journalists. Of the

101 journalist assaults during the election period, 88 were at the hands of the police.

What is worrying is that the Media Council, which is supposed to protect the welfare and interests of all journalists across the media spectrum, has been silent. The Council's chairperson, Paul Ekochu, has promised to investigate, but nothing has been done so far.

Scores:

Individual scores:



Average score:

1.2

4.6 The State takes effective legal and other measures to investigate, prosecute and punish perpetrators of attacks against media practitioners and ensures that victims have access to effective remedies.

The State does little to investigate the perpetrators of attacks against media practitioners. The victims often do not receive effective remedies from the state. The Human Rights Enforcement Act 2019 holds public officials accountable for human rights violations, compensates victims of human rights violations and criminalises the violation of human rights.

Section 10 of the Act provides that:

(1) A public officer who, individually or in association with others, violates or participates in the violation of a person's rights or freedoms shall be held personally liable for the violation notwithstanding the State being vicariously liable for his or her actions.

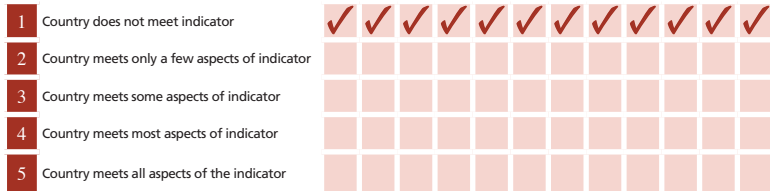
Despite the existence of the law, police officers frequently go unpunished. Yet, the Uganda Police Force (UPF) has established the Police Force Standards Unit to handle complaints from the public concerning the "misconduct" of police personnel. While it sometimes handles complaints from the public, the same cannot be said of attacks on journalists and the complaints emerging from this.

Many police officers do not understand the Fourth Estate's role, so there is a need for training in this area, not only for the police but also for judicial officers.

‘For example, during additional training on the intersection between freedom of expression and media freedom, some judges have informed the trainer that had they known the importance of media freedom and expression, they would have ruled differently in certain media cases.’

Scores:

Individual scores:



Average score: 1.0

4.7 Equal opportunities regardless of race or ethnicity, social group, gender, sexual orientation, religion, disabilities, and age are promoted in media houses.

Article 21 of the Constitution prohibits gender discrimination. It enshrines the principle of equality before the law, regardless of sex, race, colour, ethnicity, tribe, religion, political belief, or social or economic standing. The Equal Opportunities Commission is a statutory body established by an Act of Parliament to operationalise Article 32(1) and Article 32(2) of the Constitution. It is mandated to eliminate discrimination and inequalities against any individual or group of persons on the grounds of sex, age, race, colour, ethnic origin, tribe, birth, creed or religion, health status, social or economic standing, political opinion or disability, and take affirmative action in favour of groups marginalised based on gender, age, disability and tradition.

The Constitution and the Commission do not mention discrimination based on sexual orientation.

It’s taboo to discuss issues of sexual orientation in Uganda. Same-sex relationships are criminalised in the country, as stated in Indicator 2.10. This makes it difficult for the media, specifically State media, to run stories on the LGBTQIA+ community.

Most mainstream newspapers promote equal opportunities for both women and men. But in the broadcasting sector, audience share measurements determine who appears on the screen. Anchors, mainly, are hired based on their looks and public speaking skills. Panellists feel that if someone with a different sexual orientation were hired, the media institutions would not announce it. So, this information largely remains unknown.

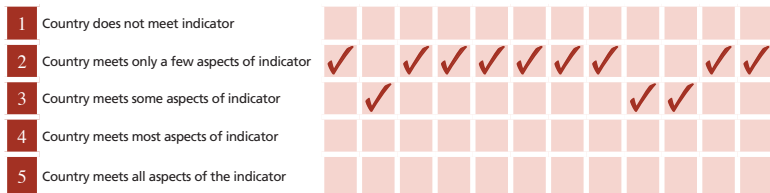
Several people living with a disability work in the media, and this does not seem to be an issue. There has been a shift. Ethnicity is also not a hindrance to opportunities in the media. Jobs are competed for and not based on ethnic equity. However, the western and central regions produce more media practitioners because of resources and access to education.

There is a high turnover of women in newsrooms. Many women leave to join public relations and marketing jobs, which pay better but are safer than journalism.

There are few opportunities for young people, who must work hard to penetrate the system.

Scores:

Individual scores:



Average score:

2.3

4.8 Journalists and other media practitioners are organised in trade unions or professional associations representing their interests effectively.

Uganda has several journalists and media associations, such as:

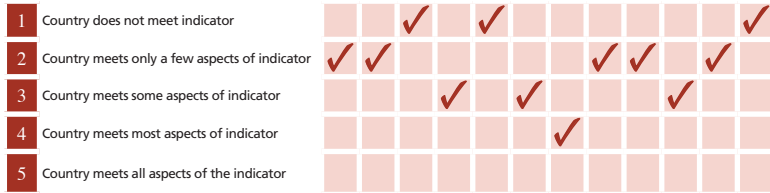
- Uganda Editors Guild
- Uganda Journalists Union and Uganda Journalists Association
- Human Rights Network for Journalists
- Uganda Media Women's Association
- Ethnic press associations (e.g. West Nile Press Association and the Northern Uganda Media Club – NUMEC)
- Religious media organisations (Catholic Media Association, Muslim Media Association)

Most of these groups are not effective and are reactive instead of proactive.

Sometimes, there is positive action by the associations. For example, the Uganda Journalists Association (UJA) dragged the UCC to court seeking to stop its directive to some media houses to suspend at least 39 journalists for allegedly violating broadcasting standards.

Scores:

Individual scores:



Average score: 2.2

4.9 Journalists and media houses have integrity and are not corrupt.

‘Yes, there are cases of corruption in the media.’

Panellists agreed that corruption is bound to occur when working conditions and salaries are poor. ‘Corruption in Uganda is very normal and an everyday thing.’ There are many instances where brown envelope and chequebook journalism happen. Freelance journalists are more susceptible to bribe-taking.

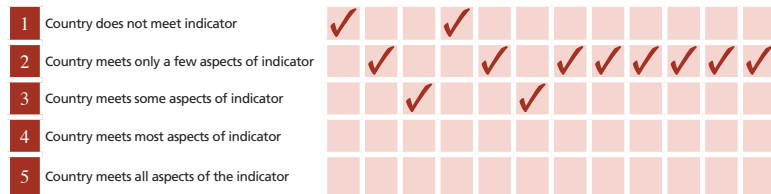
Media companies’ aspiration for advertising is one of the main drivers of corruption. Media owners make deals with companies to provide them with positive stories in exchange for getting advertisements from that company. Media owners depend on these adverts to pay salaries and go to great lengths to please the advertisers. Conversely, some companies also approach media houses when they see negative stories about them. They offer the media house advertising to kill any further negative stories.

The development sector is also guilty of complicity. Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) must show their funders they are having an impact, and newspaper articles are considered proof of this impact. Therefore, NGOs sometimes pay journalists to write stories. As a result, when an NGO requests media houses to cover events, journalists boldly ask for payment to provide coverage. Many NGOs have now decided to set aside a budget for media coverage.

The big media houses such as the *Vision Group*, *UBS* and the *Nation Group* have freebies policies. They also promote zero tolerance for bribes. For example, if a journalist does not declare a freebie at the *Nation Group* and the editor finds out, the journalist will be dismissed. Many smaller media houses do not have clear policies on freebies, and journalists require sources to pay for transport (and sometimes meals) to cover the story.

Scores:

Individual scores:



Average score: 2.0

4.10 Journalists and editors publish freely and do not practise self-censorship.

Journalists in Uganda engage in self-censorship to respond to the Government’s continued curtailing of media and online freedoms. Sometimes media outlets, such as the *Nation Media Group (NMG)*, strategically use self-censorship.

‘There is a thought at the back of the media group that the *Nation Media Group* should outlive the current Government. Therefore, they don’t want to invite the Government’s wrath unnecessarily. Stories are written so that they do not get the media house in trouble, without compromising the quality or truthfulness of the story.’

Sometimes self-censorship is used to buy more time to get concrete facts or to protect journalists. The *NMG* mindfully uses it as a strategy. No stories are canned before publication at the *NMG*, and while there is no pre-publication censorship, the group must be careful how they write specific stories. Journalists and editors have to use wisdom in how they write particular stories.

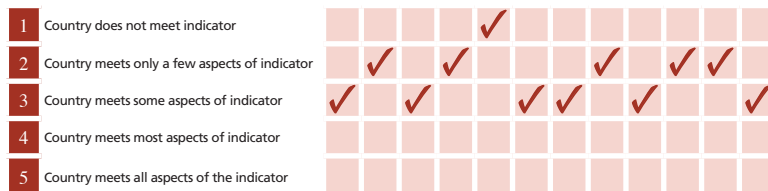
In many media houses, journalists and editors ask themselves whether a story is worth publishing. For example, *NTV* investigated how criminals were renting guns from the police. Even though the evidence was overwhelming, the broadcaster failed to get a comment from the police. The lawyer for the media house said that unless the broadcaster got a comment from the Independent Police Investigative Directorate (IPID), they should not publish the story. The story was shelved.

The state-owned media, *UBS* and the *Vision Group*, tread a fine line in how they cover stories. There are specific issues they will not touch, for instance, stories on the LGBTQIA+ community or critical reports about the Presidency.

Both the state- and privately-owned media sometimes use “pass-the-chit journalism” to get politically loaded stories published. Journalists give tips to MPs to raise specific issues in Parliament. The media would then write the story based on the responses and conversations in Parliament. For instance, the *Daily Monitor* reported an oil and gas story based on an exposé by an MP.

Scores:

Individual scores:



Average score:

2.4

4.11 Media professionals have access to training facilities offering formal qualification programmes and opportunities to upgrade skills.

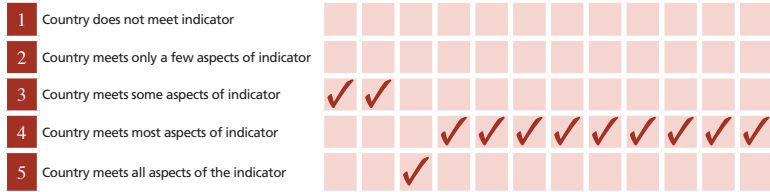
The country has plenty of media training organisations, but most are concentrated in the capital city. The quality of the training is also a challenge as many institutions lack adequate training equipment, especially to meet today’s digital-driven journalism. Many journalism degrees are more theoretically oriented and offer limited applied skills. For instance, the Uganda Media Women Association provides training on gender-sensitive reporting, and CIPESA also conducts training on digital rights reporting. The African Centre for Media Excellence also plays an essential role in the media training space. Many funding organisations also fund many training opportunities.

An innovative media training start-up, the Media Challenge Initiative (MCI), offers the missing hands-on skills that universities only offer in a limited way. The Media Challenge Academy/HUB is a media space created to provide media students with hands-on practice in developing content for online platforms through training, mentorship, and peer-to-peer learning. Many universities and newsrooms find the training useful. The Academy also has mobile studios that drive to towns outside Kampala. The *Daily Monitor* has 26 journalists, of which nine are MCI Fellows.

‘There is a need for more innovative training opportunities like MCI in the country.’

Scores:

Individual scores:



Average score: 3.6

Overall Score for Sector 4: 2.1

THE WAY FORWARD

1. What were the developments in the media environment in the last three to four years?

Positive Developments:

- Changes within the State broadcaster.
- Increase in private broadcasters (pluralism).
- National coverage has grown, irrespective of content.
- Solidarity and pushback among journalists.
- Practical training of journalists is on the rise (UCU has excellent equipment and MIC training facilities).
- UCC's interaction with the media improved.
- Improvement in media diversity.
- The former ICT Ministry introduced positive changes which have since been institutionalised:
 - Review of broadcaster
 - Interaction with media
 - Open Parliament
 - Communication Officers in the districts
 - Decentralisation of information
 - ISP and media broadcasters' arrangement
- Journalism awards help to improve quality of journalism.
- Establishment of Uganda Media Sector Working Group and Editors Guild.
- Recognition of social media.
- The proliferation of online media (positive ones).
- The digitalisation of the media.

Negative Developments

- Online media impacts the quality of journalism.
- Shrinking ad spend.
- The welfare of journalists is not adequate.
- Restrictive legislation.
- Internet shutdowns and blocking of social media sites.
- Impunity against journalists.
- The Government picking journalists from the newsroom to cover State events.
- OTT replaced by a 12% tax on data.
- Online threats.
- Surveillance cameras (from China).
- Increased use of data.

2. What kinds of activities are needed over the next three to four years?

Recommendations from the panellists:

Drivers	Activities	Additional Notes
Uganda Editors Guild	Strengthening the independence of the regulatory bodies.	Editors should drive this.
	Strengthening the Association of Journalists to lobby and improve their welfare (by both the State and CSOS).	
Human Rights Journalists Network	Sensitise the police and the security cluster on the media's work and the journalists' role.	
	Need for a unified approach to lobbying Parliament.	
	Media literacy (especially digital literacy) due to polluted information – misinformation, disinformation and false. The advent of social media has eroded trust in the media.	

Panellists:

Media:

1. Jane Angom – Station Manager
2. Agnes Kyotalengerire – Journalist
3. Abbas Mpindi – Founder, CEO
4. Maurice Mugisha – Deputy Managing Director
5. Raymond Mujuni – Ugandan Investigative Journalist
6. Juliet Nanfuka – Communications Officer/Journalist

Civil Society:

7. Catherine Anite – Lawyer
8. Imam Idi Kasozi – Cleric
9. Johncation Muhindo – Team Leader
10. Dr Emily Maractho – Head of the Department of Journalism and Media Studies
11. Robert Sempala – CEO
12. Dorothy Baziwe – Executive Director

Rapporteur: Sarah Chiumbu

Moderator: Reyhana Masters

The panel discussion took place at Protea Hotel, Entebbe, from 13-14 August 2022