

MAKING DEVELOPMENT NEWSWORTHY

Getting development into the Ugandan mass media

Gavin Anderson

Owen Kibenge




FIT-SEMA
Small Enterprise
Media in Africa

Funded by
 Sida

Table of Contents

Background to the paper	2
Introduction	3
Section 1	4
Analysis: the current situation	4
1.1 Why should Development bother to engage with the media?	4
1.2 The media cannot be trusted!': The realities of the Ugandan Media	7
1.3 Is Development doing it right?	12
Section 2	18
Guide: Getting Development into the Ugandan Mass Media	18
2.1 Understanding the Ugandan Media: An overview of the media in Uganda.	18
2.2 What is newsworthy?	23
2.3 Approaches to getting development into the Ugandan mass media	24
2.3.1 Building up an in-house understanding of the media and a journalist network.	26
2.3.2 Preparing and effectively disseminating newsworthy press releases that grab media attention.	29
2.3.3 Organising professional press conferences that create news and media interest	32
2.3.4 Improving the ongoing dissemination of development information.	36
2.3.5 Giving time to and preparing for media interviews.	38
ANNEX 1	
Sample Press Release	42

Background to this paper

This paper has been developed by the International Labour Organisation's FIT SEMA (Small Enterprise Media in Africa) project. ILO FIT SEMA is funded by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida). FIT SEMA aims to build the skills and capacity of the mass media in Uganda to cover and report on informal, micro and small business issues. The project is also working to improve the flow of information to the media to maximise the potential of the mass media to be a catalyst for, and partner in, small enterprise development.

The ILO FIT SEMA project has a unique perspective on the Ugandan media. The project has three technical staff, 2 of whom are media professionals and one who is a development professional. The mix of media and development professionals in one office, combined with FIT SEMA's close work with the Ugandan media, media consultants and enterprise development agencies, has proven to be the catalyst for this paper. This mix has highlighted the differences, misconceptions and misunderstandings that exist between the Development and Media industries.

FIT SEMA's approach to capacity building the media to cover the issues of informal and small businesses has also highlighted the potential benefits and impacts of working with the media as a partner in development. The project does not buy airtime but supports radio stations to develop popular programmes covering business issues that attract audiences and therefore advertisers. Since the ILO began to support this work in 1999, 21 radio programmes on 18 radio stations in 12 Ugandan languages have been established that focus on informal and small business issues. This amounts to almost 19 hours of radio broadcasting on small business issues per week across the country. A survey in 5 language areas of Uganda in 2004 indicated 73% of adults in the middle to low income brackets were regular listeners to the small business programmes, which translates into 7 million listeners across the country. This work has therefore highlighted the potential role of the commercial mass media in development. A role that is based on the media recognising that development issues are newsworthy, attract audience interest and are therefore something to be mainstreamed into media coverage.

This paper is based on the premise that the media and development industries in Uganda are not working together nearly as effectively as they could be. This premise was tested by undertaking 2 surveys in September 2004. The first survey involved a structured questionnaire implemented to 30 development professionals working with Ugandan bilateral and multilateral donors, UN agencies, NGOs, project implementers and consultants. The questionnaire explored perceptions of the Ugandan media within the development industry and their view of their understanding of the media. The second survey involved a structured questionnaire implemented to 25 senior editors and experienced journalists in the newspaper, print and television industries in Uganda. This survey tested perceptions of development among media professionals and issues within the media industry itself. These surveys are quoted within this paper.

This paper was also reviewed in detail by 5 senior journalists including a former Managing Editor of the Monitor Newspaper.

Important technical contributions have also been made to this paper by Timeline, a Ugandan Development Communication Consultancy. These contributions have been in understanding newsworthiness, preparing press releases, organising press conferences and developing effective linkages with the media.

Introduction

This paper is aimed towards development professionals working in Uganda. It does not focus on how to advertise in the media but how to engage with the media as a partner in development. This paper puts forward the argument that, in general, the Development and Media industries do not work effectively together and that simple changes can be made in the way Development links to the Media that will provide win-win scenarios for both industries. The paper is both a critique of the current situation and a guide to possible changes that could be made to enhance the role of the media in Ugandan development.

This paper should not be interpreted as suggesting that Development stops purchasing airtime or space from the media. Advertising and social marketing campaigns remain important for Development and to the profitability of the media in Uganda. But the paper questions the approach of almost solely purchasing space or airtime to run programmes, articles and supplements particularly when it inadvertently or deliberately undermines journalistic values, editorial control and impartiality in the media. The paper promotes approaches that will improve the flow of information from Development to the Ugandan Media.

While the paper is open, frank and at times critical of both Development and Media, this is done to bring into spotlight the major issues that affect the collaboration between the two industries. As explained in the paper, the writers' experience, discussions with both development and media professionals, and the survey undertaken by FIT SEMA have shown the weaknesses that exist in the relationship between the media and development industries. Highlighting the weaknesses within the Ugandan media and the way in which Development uses the media in its work is intended to reinforce the need for change and to promote better understanding between the two industries. It is not intended as a criticism of individuals, specific organisations or any particular company.

Note on language used within the paper

The paper uses Development with a capital D to refer to the industry itself, while development in lower case refers to the activity.

Section 1

Analysis: The current situation

1.1 Why should Development bother to engage with the media?

Why should Development take the extra effort to engage with the media? It is a good question. Buying space in newspapers or airtime on radio or TV in Uganda is easy and cheap, particularly in comparison to many other countries. On the other hand, developing a real and effective partnership with the media appears time consuming, difficult and, with the danger of being misquoted and misrepresented, even dangerous.

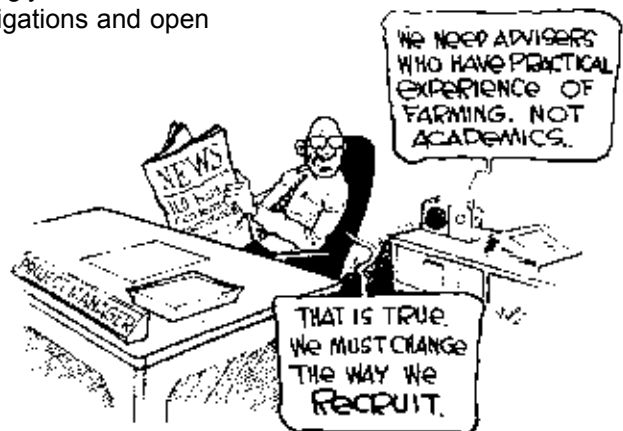
Stripped down to its essentials, development aims to build local capacity, institutions and systems and be a catalyst for locally driven initiative. Good development avoids dependency and builds sustainable local structures and institutions that are part of an ongoing development process. Viewed in this context, the media is a local institution, part of Ugandan civil society, and potentially plays an integral and critical role in an ongoing development process.

The role of the media in development

What is the potential role of the Ugandan media in the process of national development? One role is certainly that of dissemination of Development information but the media's role is also potentially much more. While the media can be an effective channel through which information on income generation, health, education, environment etc. is disseminated, the media is not just a one-way channel of communication. One of the striking changes in radio broadcast media after its liberalization in Uganda in 1993 was the growth in live talk shows and phone-in discussions. In effect the media moved from being a one-way information dissemination channel to listeners into a two way communication channel where listeners could debate, discuss and air their points of view. As radio increasingly moves out of the studios to undertake field interviews, investigations and open public debate the process becomes more inclusive and this role is strengthened¹.

In development, the media can potentially become a platform through which the true stakeholders of development (ordinary Ugandans) can influence the development process. Misconceptions of development can be highlighted and potentially addressed and views can be understood and possibly accommodated. Public debate in the media, if done effectively, reaches mass audiences,

'Radio could be the most wonderful communication system possible...if it were capable, not only of transmitting, but of receiving...of making the listener not only hear, but also speak'
Bertold Brecht, German Playwright, 1932



² For example, the work of ILO FIT SEMA and others to support the Ugandan radio media to establish programming that involves field based reporting and public debates and the 'peoples parliament' programmes in Uganda.

provides a voice for ordinary Ugandans and in effect contributes to democratising development. This role is particularly important in Development, which is often misunderstood by the 'beneficiaries' and the wider public and requires public involvement and support to be truly effective.

Development is a process of change and most in development agree that to be effective the change must take place within the mass of the population. For example, health provision is ineffective without public awareness and understanding, environmental protection is unlikely to occur without the active participation of the majority of the population who work on the land, improved governance requires popular support and pressure, effective private sector development requires the involvement of the majority in the informal and agricultural businesses. The mass media is one of the few ways of reaching the majority and therefore critical and central to the development process.

The role of information in private sector development

'Every aspect of industry and commerce requires the supply and efficient delivery of information on which to conduct business, to base decisions, to compete successfully and plan for growth and development. Business information and communication - and the "industry" responsible for this - is thus positioned at the very core of economic life.'

Connecting Business, A report prepared by the Business Information Forum funded by the UK Department of Trade and Industry (Dti)

Why buying media space and airtime is not enough

The roles of providing feedback to Development, stimulating public debate on development and enhancing transparency and accountability in development can only work effectively in a media that is an independent platform for analysis, debate and discussion and not a paid messenger of development information.

Buying airtime or space in the media, while making the industry more profitable, does little to build the quality of journalism in Uganda or stimulate greater in-house coverage of development issues within the media. In fact, some would argue that the purchasing of media to air pre-recorded programmes or pre-prepared articles, or the trend of taking over editorial control of development-sponsored programmes is actually undermining the potential independent and therefore sustainable role of the Media in development. For example, the Straight Talk Foundation has set up and runs a radio production studio with full-time radio producers and presenters. One senior programmes producer working at a major station that broadcasts the programme stated:

'The Straight talk programmes are sent to us on CD. We have no say or involvement in the content or production of the programmes...we feel no ownership over these programmes and would not run them if they were not paid for... We are radio professionals and I know that we could produce better programmes in collaboration with Straight Talk. At the very least we should be consulted over content'

The approach of buying space and airtime is also not sustainable. 4 senior radio professionals in the commercial radio industry could not name one radio programme that was initiated and funded by development agencies that has ever been continued by a commercial radio station². In addition, this approach often results in editorial control being taken away from the media.

² Consultation with radio analysts and senior radio producers in Kampala in 2004.

Towards greater collaboration

While Development may generally accept the principle that the media plays a critical role in an ongoing development process, the practice of many projects and organisations does little to strengthen this role. Many development projects and organisations view the media as being on the periphery of their core activities; they use it, for example, as a channel for project information dissemination or a platform for publicising the project. As highlighted by research undertaken by FIT SEMA in 2004, most in development have deep misgivings about the potential of the Ugandan media to play an independent professional role in the development process. 75% of development professionals viewed the media as being unprofessional while 85% believed that the media covered development issues poorly. These perceptions are based on poor experience of the Ugandan media and 80% of development professionals stated that they or their organisation had been misquoted in the media.

'We commission consultants to carry out many important studies and reviews and their reports line our shelves. We organise dissemination workshops and invite key stakeholders to attend, but these issues typically do not get out into the public domain. Journalists and reporters have an important role to play in stimulating public debate, but our experience with the media has made us wary. Either we get misquoted or they focus exclusively on what they see as the most controversial aspect of a report. That said, we recognise the opportunity to link up more effectively with the media and are working on a new Communications Strategy'

DFID Adviser, *Kampala*

While the media in Uganda, as explored later in the paper, is certainly weak in many respects, a response of non-engagement or of ignoring the independent role of the media in covering development issues must be questioned. The potential role of a media in the development process needs to be recognised and understood and development activities designed to include the media as a central part of the development process; in other words, working with the media as a partner in development.

1.2 'The media cannot be trusted!'

The realities of the Ugandan Media

Few would deny that there are significant weaknesses within the Ugandan media industry. Development has an extremely negative perception of the Media in Uganda. As noted earlier 75% of development professionals in Uganda rated the Ugandan media as either unprofessional or very unprofessional³. This section aims to expose and discuss some of these problems. It is important to recognise the weaknesses within the media industry to allow us to work with it in the most effective ways possible.

Money, money, money...

The Ugandan media is primarily a commercial industry. All the major newspaper publishers, 2 of the 3 local television broadcasters and 63% of radio broadcasters are commercial companies⁴. Like any commercial industry money and profit therefore form the bottom line and obviously not development, social welfare or poverty reduction. Is this commercial orientation in conflict with a role in development?

In some circumstances this commercial orientation is in conflict with development. Commercial media is unwilling to criticise its largest advertisers and are willing to compromise impartiality to create 'advertorials' (adverts disguised as articles or content) for public, private and also Development clients. But the fundamental business of the media is to attract an audience (listeners, readers or viewers) and it is this audience that is what is sold to advertisers. Without an audience, commercial media cannot attract advertisers. Approaches that undermine audience levels are therefore fundamentally bad business practice. Poorly managed media companies do not recognise this and will place advertisers' interests ahead of audiences' interests. Well run media companies, on the other hand, recognise the importance of listeners, cater for their interests and therefore try to balance listener and advertiser interests.

80% of media professionals believed that their media house had changed, refused to run or removed news items or stories that are negative towards large advertisers.

FIT SEMA Research, September 2004

Approaches that undermine audience levels are therefore fundamentally bad business practice. Poorly managed media companies do not recognise this and will place advertisers' interests ahead of audiences' interests. Well run media companies, on the other hand, recognise the importance of listeners, cater for their interests and therefore try to balance listener and advertiser interests.

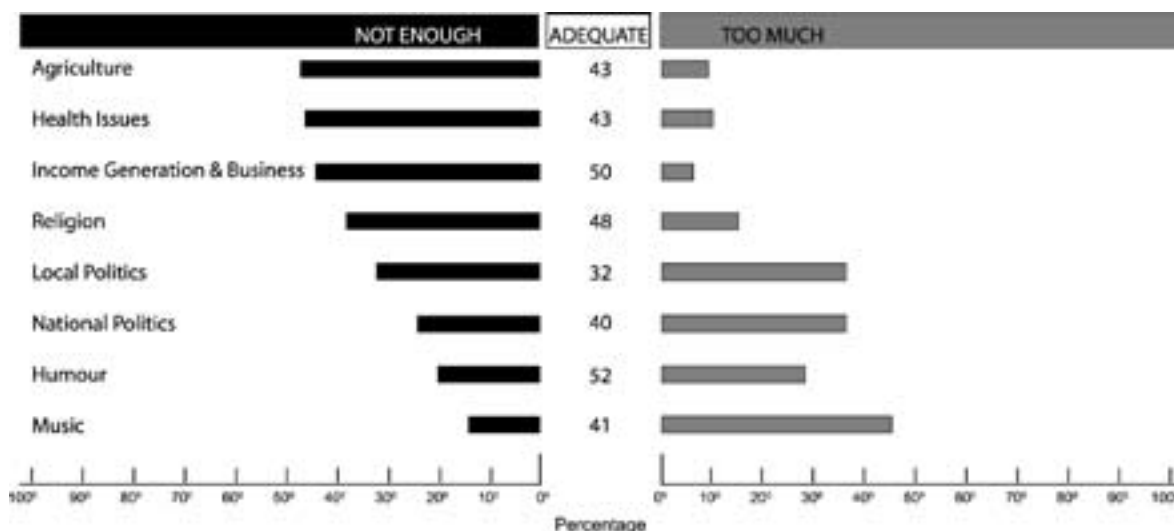
A common misconception within some in the media is that audiences are primarily interested in entertainment. While there is no doubt that audiences want entertainment from the media, recent research by both ILO FIT SEMA and the Uganda Broadcasting Council⁵ has shown that the greatest demand from radio listeners is for better quality information that is Developmental in nature. Effective and well run media companies should therefore be responding to this demand and there is therefore the commercial objectives of the Media should not be in conflict with the non-profit objectives of Development.

³ FIT SEMA Research, September 2004

⁴ Drawn from the statistics of the Uganda Broadcasting Council

⁵ National Broadcasting Policy study, Uganda Broadcasting Council, 2003/2004.

Audience perceptions of programme coverage on Ugandan FM Radio



Source: FIT –SEMA Research with 1111 radio listeners in the Luganda, Ateso, Rutooro, Ruchiga, and Runyankole speaking areas of Uganda, May/June 2004

The way in which large advertisers, and as explained later in the paper - Development itself, influence content often distorts the media away from being focussed on audiences. Despite this, well run commercial media companies should be audience responsive and led, can represent the interests of the public and therefore be a force in development.

Owner manipulated

Media ownership should be recognised as another factor in undermining impartiality and effective functioning of the media. Many radio stations are owned by politicians, religious organisations and other minority-interest groups. Some media owners exert their influence on the media houses and undermine a basic fundamental of good journalism – impartiality and balance. While this is common across the world, it is particularly prevalent in Uganda where media owners will influence content even at the expense of popularity with audiences. For example a radio station in Eastern Uganda was besieged by protesters and lost significant listenership after providing strong support to one candidate in a local election⁶. Open debate on family planning is not possible on Catholic owned stations and some stations limit interviews with representatives of certain political points of view⁷. One radio station in Western Uganda for example campaigned against polio vaccination with the support of a US based lobby group. It is therefore important to understand biases within media houses and choose media partners strategically.

87% of media professionals who gave an opinion stated that the owners/managers of their media house influenced editorial balance
FIT SEMA Research, September 2004

Underpaid and under resourced

Those working in the Ugandan media, and particularly freelance and junior reporters, are often grossly underpaid. Journalists can be paid as low as 5,000Ush (\$US 2.50) for a feature article in newspapers, rural radio journalists 5,000 to 10,000 (US\$ 2.50 to \$5) for a radio show. They are often expected to cover research from these fees, so it is hardly surprising that articles appear that are

poorly researched and uncorroborated. While those in media development try to lobby for change, this remains a characteristic of the Ugandan media. On the other hand, there are committed and relatively well resourced journalists in various media houses in Uganda. These are the people that Development needs to identify and work with.

'The brown envelope' : 'bribe, incentive, facilitation, allowance'

With such poor remuneration of journalists in Uganda, it is hardly surprising that there is a culture of corruption in the media. In journalists' own language, 'the brown envelope culture' appears to be widespread throughout print, radio and TV. Whether it be a blatant bribe or disguised as an incentive, facilitation or allowance, in reality it often amounts to much the same. UTV reporters require various charges to be paid for and transport 'facilitated', and if the 'facilitation' is available will cover even the blandest and least newsworthy events. Large companies hold 'parties' for journalists and use the media sales agents, who hold their advertising 'account' and fear losing lucrative commissions, to lobby for favourable media coverage. While commercial media has tried to clamp down on this, corruption remains a significant problem and this undermines the overall integrity and quality of the industry.

81% of media professionals who gave an opinion stated that journalists in their media house accept bribes or 'incentives' to influence their articles or programmes
FIT SEMA Research, September 2004

But it has to be recognised that development agencies have also contributed to this culture. Allowances at workshops and training courses, overly generous transport allowances and even well funded study tours have the same general effect of orienting journalists towards issues by financial incentive rather than newsworthiness.

The media agenda is therefore distorted by various financial incentives and bribes. The challenge is to make development issues newsworthy and stand on their own merit, rather than using financial incentives to distort the media further.

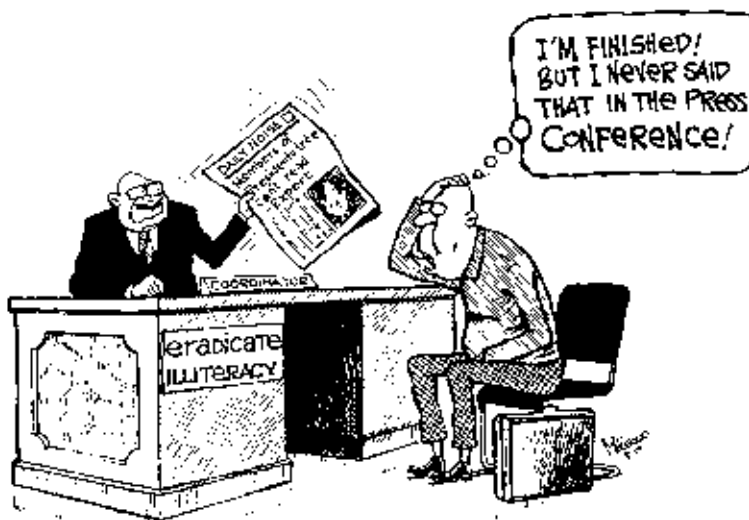


To pay, or not to pay...
'You have to pay to appear on UTV. Payments are needed for, cameras, reporters, editors, camera stands, lighting for night functions and transport. If there is no payment there is no coverage no matter how newsworthy the event is. With the correct payments anything will be covered'
Ex-public TV presenter

⁶ This was highlighted during FIT SEMA audience research and focus group discussions in 2004. This and other perceived biases resulted in the station losing significant popularity in the area of study.
⁷ Dr. Besigye (Ugandan presidential candidate in 2001) was refused campaigning time on a private radio station in Western Uganda which was owned by a businessman with close ties to President Museveni' Not A level playing field, Report by Human Rights Watch, March 2001.

Scandalize, sensationalize, politicize

Many journalists naturally want to get into the leading headlines to make their name, and conflict and scandal can do it. Where no conflict or scandal exists, some journalists invent it. Generally, Development prefers to avoid conflict, relying on quiet diplomacy and closed-door consultation and the Development and Media worlds can therefore collide. But only a small percentage of news is conflict and scandal based and it is possible to get development in the news without it being scandalized, sensationalized or politicized. It is particularly important to identify and network with journalists who are interested in development issues. These journalists are there and as Development begins to work more effectively with the media, their numbers will grow.



'Lack of professionalism in terms of intentional misreporting to sensationalize an issue, or poor quality reporting which misses the essential point and therefore shows a lack of understanding of the issue in the media is a real problem. Recently I could have lost my job over a significant misquotation in a newspaper following a press briefing. This obviously creates reluctance in dealing with the Ugandan media in future.'

Fiona MacCulloch, *Regulatory Best Practice Unit, Ministry of Finance*

Misquoted, misrepresented, misinterpreted

It is a fact. Journalists around the world misquote and the less developed the media industry and the less trained journalists are, the greater the prevalence of misquotation. But much can be done to reduce the risk of misquotation with clear press releases, well prepared press statements and the development of a network of journalists who understand your issues.

80% of development professionals stated that they or their agency/organisation had been misquoted or misrepresented in the Ugandan media.

FIT SEMA Research, *September 2004*

An imperfect world

The Ugandan Media has a poor reputation with development professionals for some valid reasons. But this paper is written on the premise that it is the role of Development to engage with this imperfect industry and in so doing to contribute to the improvement of the media and the enhancement of the role of the media in development.

Media realities

- The media in Uganda is primarily a commercial industry; money and profit are therefore the bottom line not development, social welfare or poverty reduction.
- Well-run media companies recognise the importance of listeners, cater for their interests and therefore try to balance listener and advertiser interests.
- Media ownership should be recognised as another factor in undermining impartiality and effective functioning of the media. It is therefore important to understand biases within media houses and choose media partners strategically.
- Many journalists are grossly underpaid, but there are also many committed and relatively well resourced journalists in various media houses in Uganda. These are the people that Development needs to identify and work with.
- The media agenda is distorted by various financial incentives and bribes. The challenge is to make development issues newsworthy and stand on their own merit, rather than using financial incentives to distort media further.
- It is possible to get development in the news without it being scandalized, sensationalized or politicized. Clear information and an effective media network are part of the key.
- Journalists misquote, but much can be done to reduce the risk with clear press releases, well prepared press statements and the development of a network of journalists who understand and sympathize with your issues.

1.3 Is Development doing it right?

Is the development industry working with the media effectively? While there are notable exceptions, the answer is generally no. 60% of journalists questioned thought that development agencies and NGOs have a poor understanding of the media in Uganda. Just under half (48%) of journalists interviewed stated that development was not effective at using the media in its work. 80% of journalists stated that few or very few of the press releases received by development were newsworthy. Perhaps most worrying is the fact that Development Agencies and NGOs were rated as the least newsworthy source of information for journalists after government, politicians and private companies⁸. What are we doing wrong? This section looks at some of the most common mistakes that Development makes in trying to link to the media.

Boring...

According to some in the Media 'development is boring', but let us be clear – DEVELOPMENT IS NOT BORING. How could it be? Development has human interest, development has wide relevance to in Uganda, development is political and, yes, development involves controversy, conflict and scandal. It must often be the way that development is presented that is boring. Not only have development issues been presented to the media in boring ways, but development has forced boring programmes and articles into the media.

The wrong issues are often presented in the wrong ways and at the wrong times to the media. The media, which is used to fast moving news items, controversy, conflict and pace, is often presented with long reports full of development jargon, acronyms and economic terminology. Journalists are invited to full day 'stakeholder consultation workshops'. The development issues are seldom grounded in human reality, conflicts are shrouded with euphemism, and relevance and real impact is hidden in complex statistics.



Reuven Frank, a former president of NBC news, stated that:

'the job of a journalist is to take what's important and make it interesting'.

Development needs to prove to journalists that the information we are generating and the issues we are covering are important and allow and support journalists to do their 'job', take this information and make it interesting.

⁸ FIT SEMA Research, September 2004

⁹ For example interactive programmes on business than provide the Ugandan informal sector with a platform to expose corruption, monopolies and complaints on policy were seen to have listenership of 74% of Ugandan adults. FIT SEMA Survey May/June 2004

Making development issues interesting

While health programmes had often been delivered in formal ways on public radio, commercial radio in the mid 1990s, Commercial media managed to popularise health education by establishing programmes such as *Capital Doctor* and *CBS Doctor*. These programmes were live phone-in talk shows on love, sex and sexuality involving traditional *Ssengas* ('aunts' or elderly women who act as sexual counsellors).

The Inspector General of Government buys airtime on Ugandan radio stations to broadcast programmes that lecture Ugandans, who face exploitation on a daily basis, about their public responsibility in fighting corruption. The popularity of such programmes is questionable, whereas programmes that provide interactive and dynamic platforms for the investigation, debate and discussion of issues of corruption attract significant audience response ⁹.

Cheque-book development

We have heard of cheque-book journalism, but what about cheque book development? Development is donor driven, and the job of donors is primarily to give money. The development process is therefore often driven by money; a situation that has been passed onto our work with the media. Development has primarily used money to exert influence on the Media both at the company level by the prevalence of buying space and airtime, and at the individual journalist level with allowances, lucrative study tours and various incentives to cover and take interest in development.

'[bribes to cover stories] are not condoned by the mainstream media, but the whole thing has been spoiled by the seminar and workshop culture by the development agencies themselves. They begin by promising they will refund your transport and then they can sign up and get money...People come for the allowance, not for the workshop or the content, it is very very frustrating'

David Ouma Balikowa, *Ex-Editor, Monitor*.

Development needs to show the media, as a potential partner in development, that we are more than a financial resource and that we can be a source of quality, newsworthy information. A non-financial relationship built on mutual respect and benefit needs to be nurtured.

'We need control!'

Development tends to be risk averse. One of the safest ways to deal with the media is to take control. Either we write the messages and articles or prepare the programmes ourselves and use the media as merely a messenger, or we buy the space or airtime to ensure that the 'sponsor' has ultimate control over the message. While this is certainly safe, it undermines the fundamental role which a media should play in a developing democracy; that of being analytical, questioning, sceptical and balanced. Our assumptions, activities, and achievements in Development should be questioned and tested in a functioning media. Platforms should be provided in the media for the 'beneficiaries' and recipients of aid to question and if necessary criticise Development.

"I hated supplements... supplements are not journalism"

Ex-supplements editor, *Monitor*, in a discussion on paid for supplements on development issues.

To do this we must lose control. We must give journalists and editors the information and the green light to analyse, question and criticise development. Otherwise we are acting like the large companies

Supplements

"My experience is that some of the development agencies will even write the supplements themselves and will not agree to changing a word and will bring it with instructions not to change a word... when you say that this is un-journalistic and can't make sense they don't want any journalistic input because it is theirs and they will come with the head of the agency and the executive and have a big picture ... they will insist that they want it this way so that they can show their funders"

David Ouma Balikowa, *Ex-Editor, Monitor*.

who, through the weight of their advertising budgets, force good corporate news into the media and bad news out of the public arena. This is a risky strategy, but one that could lead to better and more accountable development and improved public understanding and ownership of the development process.

Mixed agendas

Promoting development or promoting our own agency or donor country? Promotion and news are not comfortable bedfellows, and promotion filtering into news undermines the integrity of programmes and articles. But one of the primary reasons Development seeks media coverage is for promotion for the project, agency or donor country and not to place a development issue in the news. The two agendas should be separated and Development should link to the media with the objectives of enhancing the development process not just to promote our agency, country or individuals.

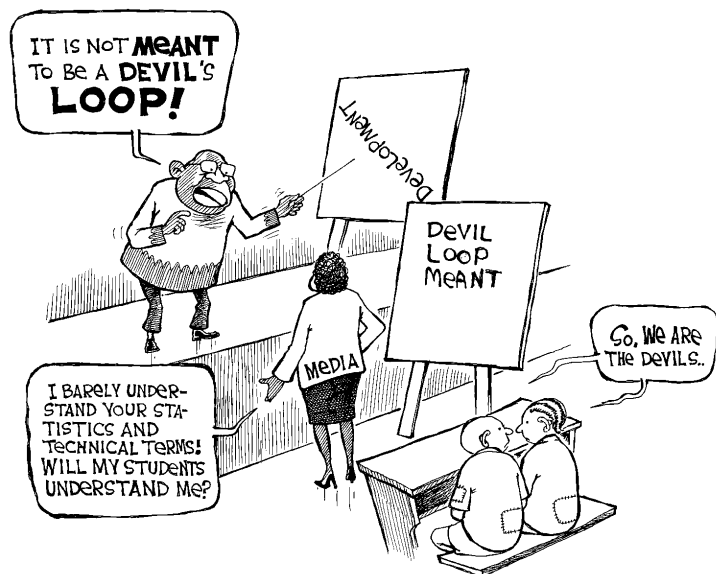
Information or promotion?

After about 16 years of rural development work, Environment Forum, a development NGO in the environment sector, commands an enviable track record. They pioneered sustainable and urban agriculture. Now the green NGO has embraced advocacy to influence policy formulation. We Interview David Wasswa the executive director of Environment Forum .

Introduction to an article that was paid for by the NGO (names changed), New Vision, September 2004

Confusion

The role of the journalist is to take information and make it understandable and interesting to their audience. The role of development when linking to the media should be to take complex development information and make it accessible, understandable and useable by journalists. The development industry, like most industries, has its own technical language. In fact it has numerous languages, that of governance, health, economics, enterprise, education, social etc. Moving from one development field



to another is like moving from one dialect to another and even development professionals struggle to adapt to the various acronyms and phraseologies. While development should not try to write articles or programmes, that is the job of the journalist, we should disseminate simple and concise information to the media that avoids jargon, complex technical terms and statistics.

Free lunches for 'journalists'

Those of us who have frequented development workshops may have noticed those extra heads appearing around mid-day. Some, non-serious, journalists appear to listen to the tail end of a debate, take lunch and disappear to write a few superficial lines or an article that misrepresents the issue being discussed. Some journalists appear to record the opening comments of the guest speaker, often a Minister or other dignitary who has little understanding of what the workshop is really about. Following a seminar on youth and development in 2003, the radio news noted that the workshop had taken place and then quoted the keynote guest 'The youth must join hands to assist Uganda to develop and fulfil its full potential'¹⁰. It is therefore no wonder that there are many who believe that development workshops are a waste of money and vacuous affairs in which no issues of any importance are discussed or resolved. While there may be some validity in this perception with some development workshops, some workshops and seminars are very valuable and cover important issues that are potentially of public interest and therefore newsworthy.

This situation causes frustration from senior editors and journalists within the media industry who perceive these workshops as potentially valuable sources of news. They are aware that these events are being frequented by non-serious and mostly freelance journalists but the length and lack of focus of development workshops usually prohibits serious journalists with tight deadlines from attending. Lack of upfront and clear information on the purpose and activities of the workshops reduces the ability of editors to clearly differentiate the newsworthy from the non-newsworthy.



Serious journalists do not have time to sit in full day development workshops and it is obviously hard to understand the issue at hand if a journalist stays for only a short time. In such circumstances, misunderstandings are inevitable. Development needs to hold professional and short press conferences and briefings at appropriate times after workshops, seminars and events. These briefings should clearly articulate to the media and, therefore the wider community, the results, findings and issues raised as a result of these events.

'The industry knows this phenomenon quite well, and it has to do with idlers who flock to conferences and workshops masquerading as journalists. The industry has made efforts to educate the public about this problem'

Fred Musoke, Lecturer in Mass Communication on the phenomenon of journalists attending workshops for the wrong reasons.

¹⁰ Radio One, Kampala, Uganda. August 2003.

I want to give a statement, but the rules say ...

Some development organisations and donors are actually banned from giving official statements to the media no matter what the nature of the statement is. Some people in Development may feel constrained by this, others hide behind this as an excuse not to interact with the media to minimize any potential risk of being misquoted or misinterpreted. This is a very common situation in governmental departments. For example, during an outbreak of foot and mouth disease in Western Uganda, a radio journalist tried to interview the District Veterinary Officer with the intention of finding out how the station's listeners could recognise the disease and respond to the outbreak. The Officer refused to make any comments stating that it was strictly forbidden for him to talk with the media without the written permission of the Minister. The radio station therefore failed to answer the questions from its audience or cover the topic of the foot and mouth outbreak effectively. Not a perfect outcome for the radio station, government's work in enhancing Ugandan livestock management or the cause of development.

Creating a parallel world

Sometimes in Development we have the tendency of creating our own world rather than engaging with the imperfect existing world. This is happening in media, with Development funding the start up of 'development oriented media' rather than engaging and working with the existing media. While in the short term this may appear to be a good way to get development in the media, such media is likely to be donor dependent and therefore not sustainable. It is often also difficult for such media to compete with established media for an audience. For example Mama FM, a radio station in Kampala targeting women, was established in 2000 with funding support from a number of donors. A media survey undertaken in 2004 indicated that the station has only achieved 4% listenership, the 3rd lowest out of 26 Kampala radio stations¹¹. Rather than working with the existing radio industry and mainstreaming development issues into the media, Development sometimes opts to support the start up of a parallel but often donor-dependent industry. This trend looks set to continue with increased donor interest being placed on funding the set up of community radio stations in Uganda¹².

Is development doing it right?

- Development is newsworthy, but the way the issues are presented to the media makes development appear to be not newsworthy.
- Development needs to show the media, as a potential partner in development, that we are more than a financial resource and that we can be a source of quality, newsworthy information.
- Development should not buy media space and airtime and control content but leave control to the media. Development should give journalists and editors the information and the green light to analyse, question and criticise development.
- Development should link to the media with the objectives of enhancing the development process rather than promoting an agency, country or individuals.
- Development should not try to write articles or programmes; that is the job of the journalist. We should disseminate simple and concise information to the media that avoids jargon, complex technical terms and statistics.

¹¹ Steadman Research Services, All Media Survey, April 2004

¹² UNESCO established 4 community radio stations in Uganda in 2004 and a World Bank Programme is exploring possibilities of establishing radio stations around Lake Victoria.

- Development needs to hold professional press conferences and briefings at appropriate times after workshops, seminars and events and clearly articulate to the media the results, findings and issues raised as a result of these events.
- Rather than working with the existing radio industry, Development sometimes opts to support the start up of a parallel but donor-dependent industry. It should engage with existing media, which already has a ready audience.

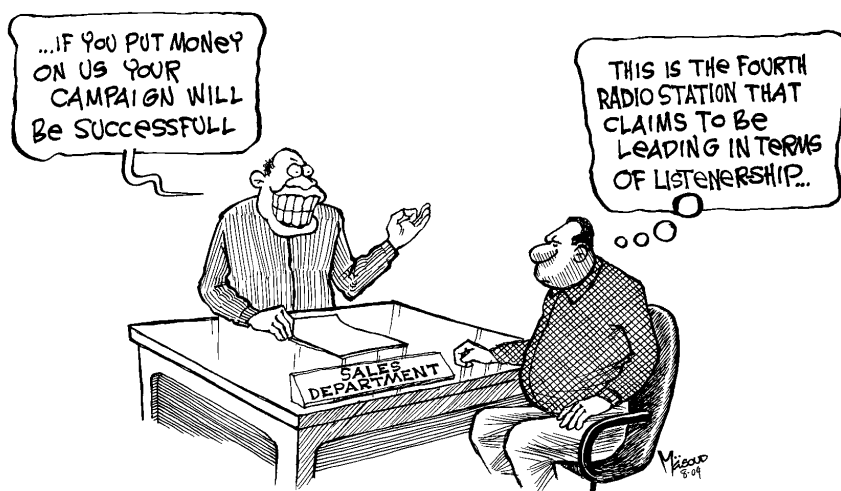
Media that aims to reach the mass audience has to use local vernacular languages. Developmental messages in English or Kiswahili will not reach the majority of Ugandans.

Literacy and the oral and reading culture in Uganda

Adult literacy in Uganda was 68% in 2001 and is increasing. However, Uganda generally remains a country with a weak reading culture, as lamented by one journalist in his article 'If only we could develop a reading culture in West Nile'¹³. On the other hand, Uganda has a strong oral culture and as the following sections will show this culture is one of the driving forces of a huge growth in broadcast media in Uganda.

Which media, which broadcaster, which newspaper?

Which media you work with will depend on whom you want to reach. The sales departments of almost every media house will make extravagant claims about their reach, readership or listenership. In 2004 New Vision became certified by the Audit Bureau of Circulations, South Africa. This is the first media company to have their readership or audience figures independently verified. Other claims of reach need to be treated with scepticism. The only way of scientifically checking the media's claims, short of undertaking your own survey, is to get hold of media research data. In mid 2004 there were two major companies dealing with media research, Steadman Research Services (SRS) and Consumer Insight International. Consumer Insight was a new company in 2004 and had therefore limited data at the time of writing. Other media research is undertaken by advertisers, advertising agencies, the Broadcasting Council and some development organisations.



While it is strongly recommended that any agency that wishes to spend relatively large amounts of money in the media or embark on a proactive and involving collaboration with the media refer to these research companies, the following information will provide some guidelines:

Print media

Daily newspapers are primarily an urban media. Daily newspapers, including vernacular newspapers, are not distributed outside the major towns and while some newspapers filter into the villages, this is more by chance than any strategic distribution plan. Some in the print media claim that on average 8 people read each copy of a newspaper¹⁴. While this figure is difficult to verify, even taking this and the circulation figures given by publishers, one daily newspaper would only reach 5.5% of the Ugandan adult population.

¹³ Comfort E Maractho, The Westniler Newspaper, May 31 – June 8th 2004.

¹⁴ New Vision.

Readership of the major newspaper on one day in Uganda (mid 2004)

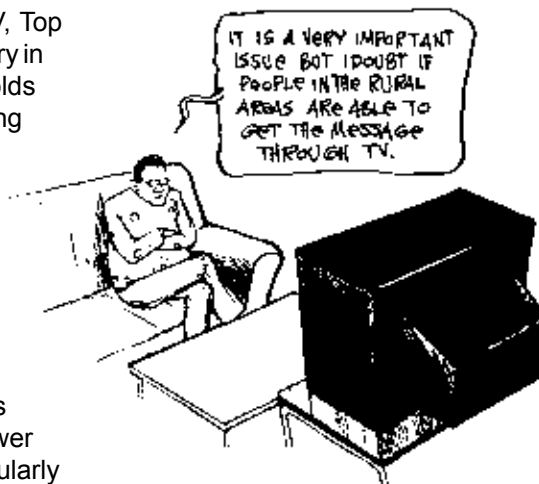
Newspaper	Daily circulation
New Vision (English)	35,000
Monitor (English)	30,000
Bukedde (Luganda)	15,000
Total daily newspaper circulation	80,000
Assuming 8 readers per copy and each reader buys only one newspaper	
Total readership per day	640,000
% reach of a daily newspaper adult population	5.5%

Does this mean that newspapers are irrelevant in Uganda? Far from it. Newspapers play an extremely important role in media in Uganda. Firstly they reach the urban, educated elite, which includes the policy makers, government, formal business, public civil servants and development employees. Secondly, newspapers heavily influence the content of the electronic media (radio's and TV's). Newspapers are therefore relevant in reaching the urban, educated elite, in reaching policy makers directly and influencing the general media agenda.

Television

In 2004 there were only 2 local TV stations with majority local content – UTV and WBS. 3 other TV stations have some local (Ugandan and East African) content: Lighthouse TV, Top TV, Channel 5 (East African TV). The television industry in Uganda is in its infancy and with only 6% of households owning a TV set and only 9% of the population having any form of electricity for lighting¹⁵, the industry looks likely to grow slowly. UTV is the only TV station that has significant national coverage while WBS only reaches Kampala, Masaka, Jinja and outlying areas.

Does this make TV insignificant in the Ugandan context? While TV has limited reach, it reaches the urban elite and therefore many policy makers and formal sector employees. TV also has the power of the moving image and certain issues are particularly powerful when portrayed on television.

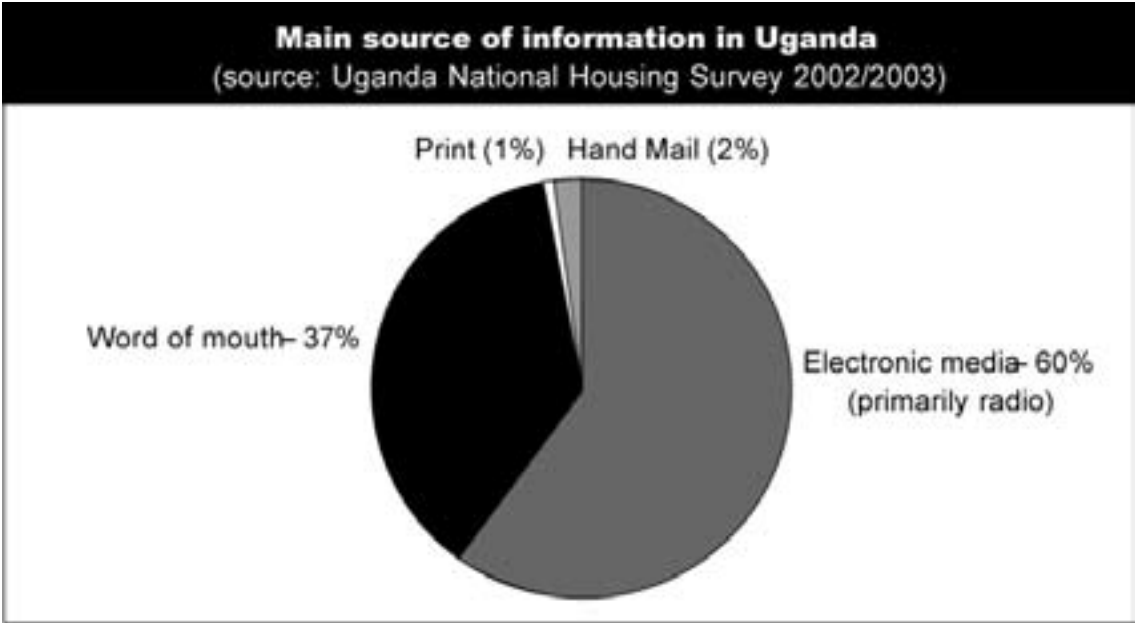


FM radio

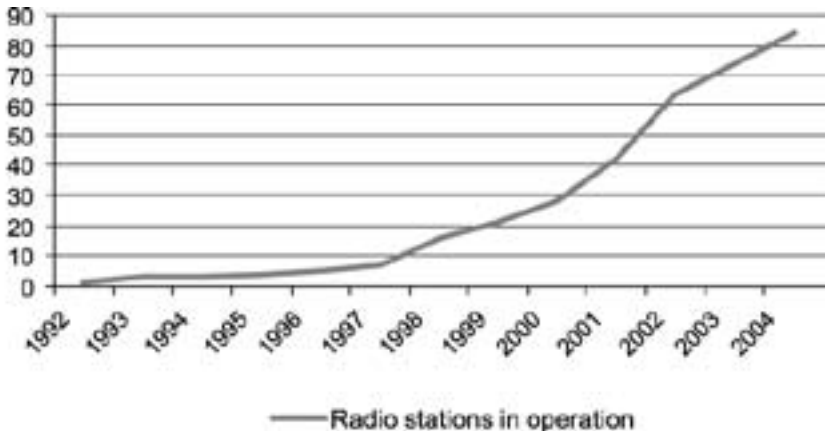
FM radio is the giant in media in terms of reach. Uganda Bureau of Statistics suggests that 63% of households own a radio while private independent surveys indicate household ownership of between 80 to 90%¹⁶. Even with the lower figures, radio has a reach of at least 10 times more than other mainstream mass media.

¹⁵ Uganda National Household survey 2002/2003

¹⁶ Surveys undertaken by Steadman Research Services and ILO



FM radio is therefore the primary mass media through which to reach the majority of Ugandans. But FM radio has become a complex media with 84 radio stations broadcasting in Uganda in mid 2004. These radio stations are now located in almost all major Ugandan towns and broadcast in almost all of the local languages and some languages of neighbouring Sudan, Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda and Kenya. This industry was first liberalized in 1993 but experienced significant growth after 1996 when the first rural stations were established.



With 84 radio stations in Uganda it is difficult to decide which stations to utilize and it is often too tempting to accept the exaggerated claims of radio broadcasters in terms of reach. While there are some clear industry leaders, FM radio is generally local radio and to effectively reach the large majority of Ugandans in languages that they understand and on stations they are most likely to listen to, an organisation would have to broadcast on at least 10 radio stations.

This paper will not detail which are the leading FM radio stations, since this is likely to change over time and this information can be collected from research organisations, but the following matrix provides some guidelines to indicate which media could most effectively reach your target group.

Media	Urban	Rural	Kampala/central	Nationwide	Youth	Poor (D to E)	Middle class	Elite (A to B)	Policy makers
Print									
English newspaper	X		X	X			X	X	X
Vernacular newspapers	X		X	X ¹⁷			X		
TV									
UTV	X		X	X	X		X	X	X
Private TV	X		X		X		X	X	X
FM Radio- content - language									
Kampala - music English	X		X	X	X		X		
Kampala - talk/music - English	X		X				X	X	X
Kampala - talk/ music - vernacular	X	X	X			X	X		X
Upcountry - talk/music - vernacular		X		X		X	X	X	X

Media monitoring

With so many media companies and with the fragmentation of the radio industry, it is difficult to monitor whether the media has covered your issues or run your adverts. Media Monitoring companies exist in Uganda to monitor the media and report to subscribers of their service. These monthly reports are usually brief but can assist in tracking media coverage and verifying whether the media is fulfilling its obligations. Steadman Research Services and Consumer Insight International provide this service.

Understanding the Ugandan media

- There is no uniting national language in Uganda. Media that aims to reach the mass audience has to use local vernacular languages. Developmental messages in English will not reach and not be understood by the majority of Ugandans.
- While best estimates put the reach of the daily newspapers at only 5%, newspapers are relevant in reaching the urban, educated elite and in reaching policy makers directly.
- The TV industry is in its infancy and with only 6% of households owning a TV set and limited access to electricity is unlikely to develop nationwide in the near future. But TV does reach the urban elite including policy makers.
- With 84 radio stations across the country broadcasting in most major local languages and with radio listenership between 65 and 80%, radio is the media through which to reach mass audiences and ordinary Ugandans across the country.
- Which media and media company you work with should depend on the specific audience segment you wish to reach.

¹⁷ Vernacular newspapers are only in certain languages. Bukedde - daily (Luganda), Rupiny - weekly (Luo), Etop - weekly (Ateso), Orumuli-weekly (4Rs)

2.2 What is ‘newsworthy’?

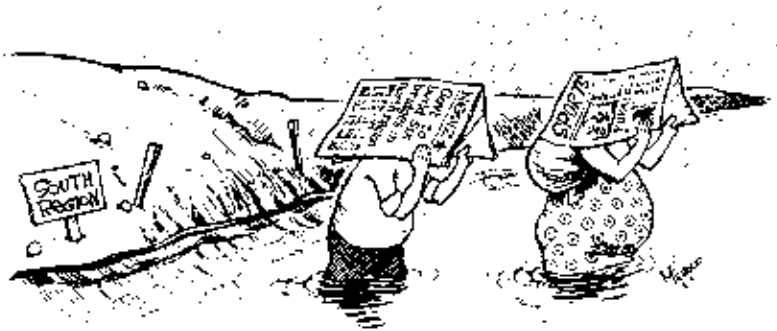
There is no single set definition of *news* but there are routine judgments that journalists and editors make in evaluating newsworthiness. These judgments are based on a set of criteria that is used to determine which events, facts, issues, and people will be covered as news. These criteria constitute what are commonly known as “*news values*.”

You will be surprised to find why people buy newspapers. The competition in the media has moved from the cover page to the inside. The trend in the media is changing because people want to read about development, they are looking for role models.'

David Ouma Balikowa, *Ex-Editor, Monitor*.

News values determine whether a *story* will be pursued to begin with and whether it will make it into the day's news columns and broadcasts. Whereas these values are common to news in general, a particular news value may not have the same importance for people in different countries or societies and within different publishers and broadcasters. To be successful at media relations, one needs to have some understanding of how journalists make their news judgments. The main news values are:

- **Proximity:** People tend to relate more to stories about developments that are close to them geographically or about people that they can identify with in some way.
- **Timeliness:** Events will have a higher rating of newsworthiness if they can be reported soon after they have happened or as they unfold.
- **Human interest:** Stories that touch people's emotions or stories presented in such a way that they have that effect are considered to be particularly appealing.
- **Prominence:** Stories that revolve around well-known personalities and even organisations.
- **Consequence:** Stories about developments that generally have the greatest impact on the greatest number of people tend to be the most newsworthy. The same applies to people, countries, and organisations.
- **Conflict:** Stories about controversies or events and issues with clearly opposing sides and intense disagreements make compelling news.
- **Oddity:** Stories about things or people that are out of the ordinary (“Man Bites Dog”) are guaranteed to get into the news.



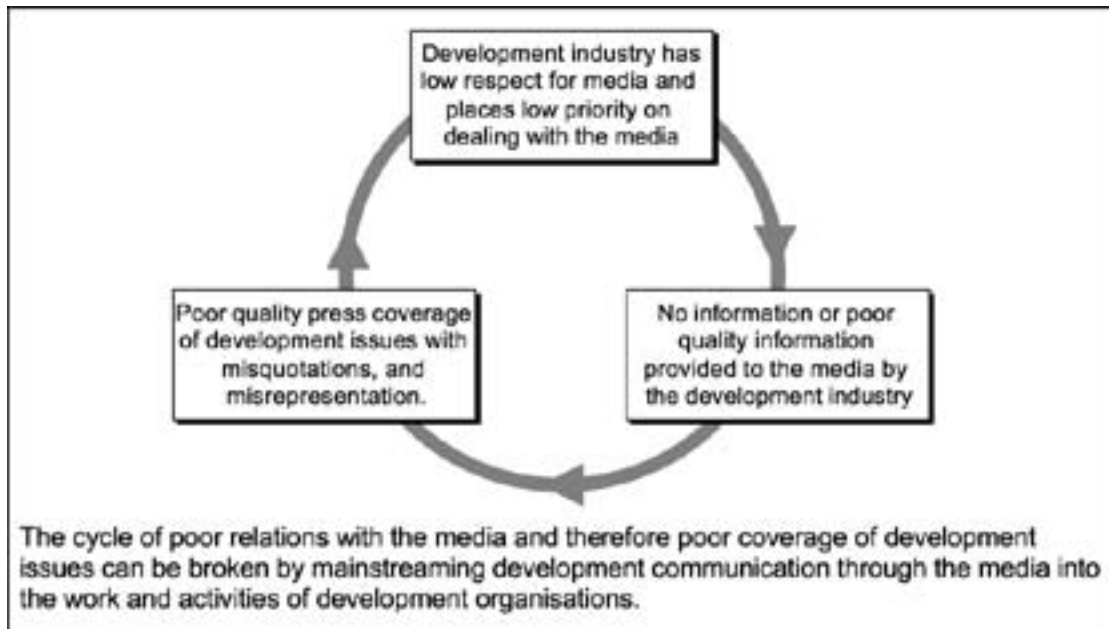
A story is unlikely to hit all of these news values, but the more values it hits the more newsworthy the story is likely to be.

Understanding News Values

- A story is more likely to be covered in the media if it is considered newsworthy.
- A story is more newsworthy if it hits news values.

2.3 I want to get development in the news, but how ...?

So what should development agencies do to improve the way in which we work with the media in Uganda? There are a number of simple and proven approaches in improving Development Communication through the mass media. The first fundamental step is to prioritize this as a mainstream part of the work of your organisation. Tagging a press briefing onto the end of a workshop, or half-heartedly answering a media enquiry is likely to result in poor results. At worse, a half-hearted approach will result in the same dangers of being misunderstood and therefore misrepresented in the media.



This paper has made the argument for improved linkages and collaboration between Development and the Media. We now provide some guidelines on how to work more effectively with the media.

Mainstreaming communication through the media into development activities.

Linking effectively to the media takes some time, but does not need to be complex or extremely time consuming. The most important step is to get your organisation to make a shift in how they perceive the media in your work.

Changing perceptions

from:

Dealing with the media, other than on a for-fee basis, as a troublesome and unnecessary distraction from the real business of development

to:

The media as an important project partner in increasing impact, creating public understanding and building greater ownership in development

An organisation that perceives working with the media as a troublesome and unnecessary distraction from their 'real work' will never be able to maximise the potential benefits of working with media as a partner in development. An organisation that perceives media as an important partner that can assist in improving the relevance, impact and public understanding of their work will be able to effectively engage with the media and increase the impact of their work.

Effectively engaging with the media means:

- 1) Building up an in-house understanding of the media and a journalist network.
- 2) Preparing and effectively disseminating newsworthy press releases that grab media attention.
- 3) Organising professional press conferences that create news and media interest
- 4) Improving the ongoing dissemination of development information.
- 5) Giving time to and preparing for media interviews.

Getting development into the news

- *Effective engagement with the media begins with making media communication a mainstream activity of your organization.*
- *Development must perceive the media as a partner in order to increase the impact of development work.*

2.3.1 Building up an in-house understanding of the media and a journalist network.

What is a journalist network?

A journalist network is simply a group of journalists who you know and who know you and who you will be able to contact and link to.

Those who make a living out of public relations and therefore linking to the media, know that building up trust and relationships with journalists and editors is probably the most important part of their work. Unfortunately there are no media directories; so, building a contact list in the media has to be undertaken by yourself. Media research companies may be able to provide you with some information, but it is not so difficult, and probably more effective to develop your own media contact list.

It is potentially dangerous to provide sensitive information that can be misused, misquoted or politicized to any or all journalists. An effective network and relationship with trusted professional journalists is therefore essential to disseminate such information.

How do we build a journalist network?

To build a network you have to have a basic understanding of the media. Building an understanding of media in Uganda can be done both formally and informally. Get hold of media research reports (Steadman Research Services, Consumer Insight and other studies) and meet with media researchers. When travelling, ask people about local media and their access to and usage of newspapers, TV and radio. Above all read, listen and watch media to understand the trends and issues being covered and the type of issues that make news.

Specialist fields of journalism

It is important to target effectively and link to the right media professionals. Journalists are often specialists in different fields. There are journalists who deal with politics, sport, business etc. but there are also journalists who deal with development issues – women, health, cultural issues, environment etc. You should try to identify journalists who are specialists in your area or appear to have a particular interest in issues related to your work. They are the ones who should become your contact points in the media. Sending your information to the wrong journalists will often result in your information being discarded or misused – a political journalist is likely to politicize your development issues and a society journalist is likely to trivialize your development information.

Identifying the right journalists to link to

- In newspapers, note the names of the journalists who are writing the best reports and articles related to your issues.
- In broadcast media, note the names of the presenters and journalists who are working on specialist programmes related to your issues or current affairs talk shows that cover development issues.

These are the people who should be in your network, invited to your press briefings and given your press releases.

30 seconds or 10 minutes: News and programmes in broadcast media

In broadcast media, news and programmes departments often operate separately. If you have an event and a 30 second mention will do the trick, then sending your information to a journalist on the news desk will suffice. If you want your issue covered in a more in-depth and therefore more meaningful way, then you will need to link to the presenters and journalists working on specific programmes (talk shows, magazine programmes etc.).

Journalist associations and forums

The Uganda Journalist Association (UJA) has a number of interest groups that focus on different topics in journalism. There are a number of separate journalist forums, some initiated by journalists themselves and some initiated and motivated by Development. These groupings can be useful as an entry point to the media, but often the names of these associations prove more promising than the reality. Some are hardly functioning and many are donor oriented which means that they may expect incentives to cover the issues or may quickly disappear once donor support appears to end. These groupings may not therefore be a useful entry point or the ready-made network that they appear at first sight. The motives behind such groups therefore need to be understood before embarking on collaboration and such groups in isolation will seldom lead to an effective journalist network.

Journalist groups

- Environment Journalist's Association of Uganda (EJAU)
- Uganda Health Media Association (UHMA)
- Uganda Business Journalist's Forum (UBJF)
- The Uganda Journalists Association small business desk
- Uganda Court Reporters (UCR)
- Climate Media Association of Uganda (CMAU)
- Uganda Media Women's Association (UMWA)
- Uganda Parliamentary Press Association (UPPA)

Opening the gates

In well run media houses there are the 'gatekeepers' of news and programmes. While the journalists collect the information and stories, there are usually editors and programme producers who decide whether these stories are run or not. They are the 'gatekeepers' in media – knocking out and changing articles and programmes for both good and sometimes dubious reasons. If they think your issue is not newsworthy, then no amount of goodwill with journalists will get your issues into the media. The 'gatekeepers' of media may sometimes have pre-conceptions about the newsworthiness of certain topics and it is therefore useful to also network with the editors and producers in media to persuade them of the potential newsworthiness of your issues.



Networking

- Building up trust and relationships with journalists is a critical step in working effectively with the media.
- Identifying specialists who are interested and have a proven track record of covering development issues in a professional and balanced way is critical.
- In broadcast media, if you want your issue covered in-depth, you need to link to the presenters and journalists working on specific programmes not journalists in the news departments.
- There are a number of journalist forums focussing on various development issues in Uganda but not all function effectively and alone will not hold the key to an effective journalist network.
- Editors have the final say on whether development issues get into the news. It is important to interact with them whenever possible.

2.3.2 Preparing and effectively disseminating newsworthy press releases that grab media attention.

What is a press release?

A press release is a concise explanation of a newsworthy event or topical issue that is provided to journalists to be used in a news piece, article or programme.

In Uganda, a press release is often confused by many organisations as a pure advertising tool, as evidenced by adverts in local newspapers labelled 'press release'. A press release is information for the media, not an advertisement to be placed in the media.

Press releases that end up wrapping peanuts

Editors in Uganda are often sceptical about press releases. This scepticism is based on experience of receiving press releases that are seldom newsworthy and often promotional. Most press releases in Uganda are fast tracked into the dustbin and as scrap paper that ends up wrapping peanuts sold by street hawkers. It is the opinion of the authors of this paper that the integrity of the press release should be revived. Good press releases **can** grab media attention if they are effectively written, sent to the right people and sent at the right time.

A Ugandan editor's view

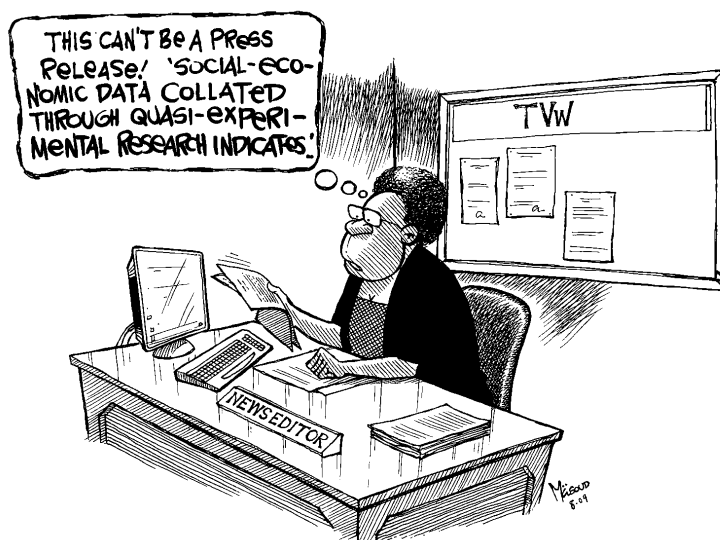
"Many press releases we get don't contain that much useful information, are poorly written, are addressed to the wrong people or do not take into consideration the newspaper's deadline. It seems many people who send these releases have little idea about the media organisation they are targeting or even the incredible volume of news competing for space."

John Baptist Wasswa, Managing Editor of *The Monitor* and ex News Editor of *The New Vision*

Press releases that grab media attention

So what is a good press release?

- **Immediately attention grabbing:** Include an eye catching large caption that shows the information is important and interesting and written in 'the inverted pyramid style' where the first paragraph is the 'lead' and the least important information comes last. The most important information is the information that shows why the issue is newsworthy (see news values above).



- **Answering the 5Ws and H:** It should answer the essential questions in the first paragraph, or at least within the first two paragraphs:
 - **Who** is the subject of the story?
 - **What** is the story about?
 - **When** is, or was, the event?
 - **Where** is, or was, it happening?
 - **Why** is the information important?
 - **How** is this significant?
- **Concise:** A press release should be no longer than 2 pages.
- **Focusing on one major issue or event:** It should not cover multiple issues
- **Clear and simple to understand:** The sentences and paragraphs should be short and easy to understand with no jargon or trade language and with clearly explained but sparing use of abbreviations and acronyms. Overuse of statistics should be avoided and any statistics clearly explained.
- **Without exaggerated or unsubstantiated claims**
- **With quotes:** Where possible it should include direct quotes that can be used by the journalists.
- **Well formatted:** The format should be:
 - Word processed
 - Double spaced
 - Wide margins for ease of reading and for reporters to make notes in
 - Typed on one side of the paper only
- **Containing essential additional information:**
 - The date the release is being issued
 - Contact details for additional information (names, phone number, fax number and e-mail address)
 - Release time. If the information is to be used immediately by the media, write the tag: "FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE." Sometimes however, news releases are sent in advance of an event but cannot be used until a specific time so that reporters have time to read the material and process the information. If this is the case, write, "EMBARGOED UNTIL" and add the date and specific time the news can be released.
 - If there is more than one page, type -more- at the end of the first page. At the end of the release type -ends-.
 - Specific notes at the end for print and broadcast media can be extremely useful. For example notes on internet based photographs or possible photo opportunities for print media, notes on additional audio or video sources for TV and radio.
- **Sent at the right time:** Send it at least 48 hours before an event or as soon after an event as possible. The media will not cover events or issues that look like old news. Also be aware of the articles, supplements and programmes in the major media houses you want to target and time the press release appropriately. For example The Monitor and New Vision have specific days assigned to education, business, women and agriculture.
- **Sent to the right people:** Send the press release directly to journalists and editors who you know will have an interest in your issue or are specialists in your field. With broadcast media decide whether to send the release to the news department or to specific programmes staff (see previous section).

- **Delivered in the right way:** If possible, deliver into the hands of the journalists and editors that you have identified.
- **Properly followed up:** Call journalists and editors and make sure they have received the press release and gauge the reaction to the release. If the reaction is not positive, do not pressure or beg the journalist; be polite and thank them for their time. Remember you will be linking to this person again and there will be a time when the answer is yes.
- **Available for statements:** Include contact details of people who will be available to make statements on the press release. You should ensure that these people are readily available and willing to give press statements.

An example of a press release is included as an annex in this paper.

Becoming the journalist yourself

With many overworked, poorly trained and underpaid journalists in Uganda, sometimes you will find that journalists will take press releases and with only a few minor changes run them as articles or read them directly in programmes or news bulletins. Should you therefore write the press release as a ready to run article? While the temptation to do this is strong, the answer is no. You are not a journalist and many articles written by development practitioners do not have the key journalistic style, format or content to make them effective and interesting. Writing the article will encourage the journalist to make the shortcut of using it as-is and may also increase the possibility of the editor scrapping the article. The key is to identify good professional and interested journalists who will turn your newsworthy information into interesting and important news.

Reaching the rural population

To reach the rural population of Uganda, news must be broadcast on the numerous upcountry radio stations in various local languages. Most of the more established upcountry stations have offices in Kampala, but sales staff and news reporters generally staff these offices. While the news reporters may file short news stories to the upcountry stations they are unlikely to forward your press releases to programmes staff at the radio stations. It is therefore worthwhile trying to identify specific programmes on upcountry radio stations and sending your press releases to the programme presenters directly, in this case probably by fax.

Press Releases

- A press release is a concise explanation of a newsworthy event or topical issue that is provided to journalists to be used in a news piece, article or programme.
- Ugandan editors are sceptical of press releases because many are purely promotional, but good press releases can grab media attention if they are effectively written, sent to the right people and sent at the right time.
- Press releases should not be ready prepared articles or scripts for programmes, but clear information for journalists to use in articles and programmes.
- To stimulate programmes that reach rural audiences press releases will need to be sent to programmes staff in upcountry radio stations. This would have to be done by fax.

2.3.3 Organising professional press conferences that create news and media interest

What is a press conference?

A **news conference** or **press conference** is a media event staged by an individual or group who wishes to attract media coverage for something claimed to have news value.

Should you run a press conference?

A press conference is a potentially valuable tool to attract news coverage but you should think carefully about whether to organise one. Are you sure that you have news? Reporters do not like spending time at what they consider a non-event when they have other news competing for their attention. It takes time, money and energy to organise a press conference. Be sure to have something worthwhile you want to announce before you think of calling a press conference.

In Uganda, a press conference may not be the right way of releasing particularly sensitive information that could be misused or politicised. It would be better to release such information to known, trusted and experienced journalists (see developing a journalist network above).

Possible mistakes

The following should be avoided:

- Attaching a press conference at the end of a seminar or workshop.
- Instead of organising a press conference, inviting journalists to full workshop or seminar.
- Bringing in stakeholders other than the media and allowing the press conference to turn into a stakeholder workshop.
- Having uninformed presenters such as guests of honour on the panel.



How to organise an effective press conference?

A well run press conference will be short, clear, well presented and convey clear newsworthy information to the media. From a well-run press conference journalists will be able to take away clear and complete information that can be turned into news and quotes that can be used in this news. A press conference will involve:

- 1) a presentation from one person or a small panel (maximum 3) of well informed presenters,
- 2) a question and answer session
- 3) time for one-to-one interviews with the media at the end of the press conference.

Here are some tips for a press conference:

- **Location:** A central but quiet location that is easily accessible and well known.
- **Time:** Should be held mid-morning to allow print journalists time to file the story before publishing deadlines.
- **Length:** No longer than one hour for presentation and questions, but time must be given at the end of the conference for individual questions.
- **Date:** When deciding on the date of a press conference, check the calendar for conflicting events that will attract media coverage. Choose a day that fits well with specific programmes, newspaper supplements etc.
- **Invitations:** Invite journalists well in advance. Be targeted and invite the journalists who are specialists or who have specific interest in your topics.
- **Follow-up before the conference:** a day or two before the event, telephone journalists to remind them for the event.
- **Press kit:** see below
- **Registration:** Get the participating journalists to register their names and contacts.

KISS- Keep it Short and Simple

Avoid long speeches and messages that can confuse. At a press conference to launch a training course in Uganda one keynote speech started ' While you might not think that the research and development of a service product such as training takes time, a service product is like any other product. For example, each component of a product such as a computer needs to be designed, tested, refined and retested before it goes into the final product and then onto the market. A training product is much the same and each component has to be designed, tested, refined and retested.' In an interview after the conference the presenter was asked ' So why is your organisation moving from development into computer manufacturing?'

After the conference:

- Send handout materials, including the press release to journalists who could not attend including upcountry journalists.
- Fulfil all promises for additional information or materials.
- Check the targeted media and track the coverage that the event received.

'Ugandan time'

It is a common scenario in Uganda to be sitting waiting for participants for up to an hour after the defined start time of a meeting. It is a hard cycle to break. The more you delay your start times, the more people will think your meetings will start late and then the more likely people will be late at your meetings. On the other hand, if your organisation develops a reputation for being concise, punctual and businesslike, the more likely people will be on-time or at least not so late. Journalists have to be in the right place at the right time to catch and not miss news. Returning to an editor, producer or manager and saying that they have missed the event they are supposed to have covered is an embarrassment that most professionals will try to avoid. Try telling journalists that you will be punctual and concise and do it. While you will miss some journalists in your first conferences, you may be surprised to find that future conferences become much more effective and involve much less wasted time.

Press kit

Many organisations provide a press kit or file of information for journalists at the end of a press conference. What is essential to provide at any press conference is:

- **Press release** on the issue covered.
- **Transcripts of speeches**
- **Brochure** and background of the organisation (s) involved in the press conference.
- **Brief biography** of each person at the press conference

Other information that can be included in a press kit includes:

- **A list of contents** of the kit
- **A short welcoming letter**, which gives basic information: name, address and telephone number of the contact person for journalists with any questions.
- **An agenda** for the press conference, if applicable.
- **Press clippings** about your organisation, issue or individuals who work with the group.
- **Visuals: pictures, graphs, maps, charts** – whatever helps convey the importance of the issue.
- **Speeches, reports, outlines and summaries of reports.** But be careful not to overwhelm the reader.
- **A backgrounder or fact sheet.** A short narrative paper that gives in-depth information about the issue. The purpose is to anticipate and answer any questions that journalists may have.

Note on Publicity events and stunts

Publicity events are another method of grabbing media attention. Rather than using a formal press conference an alternative event can be organised with a focal point for the media. The potential range of events is very wide and some organisations have used celebrities for this purpose, others use symbolic or visual metaphors such as the release of balloons or doves to reinforce an issue.

While the most blatant efforts to grab media attention through 'publicity stunts', such as hanging banners from important buildings, are unlikely to be acceptable for most development purposes, a well thought out publicity stunt has the potential of getting the media to focus on a particular event or issue. For example, to illustrate the plight of mine victims, one organisation deposited thousands of single shoes outside a conference on banning land mines. Each shoe represented one limb lost by a land mine victim. The stunt not only made the numbers affected by land mines more tangible but provided a visual focal point for TV and print media to cover the issue. As this example shows, clever and relevant publicity stunts that avoid farce can reinforce an issue and grab media attention. Publicity stunts have seldom been employed in Uganda, which means that there is some real and interesting potential in this area.

Press release, press kits and press briefings are needed to effectively explain the issue behind the media event or stunt. It would not have worked if after the land mine stunt the media had run stories with headlines 'Old shoes dumped in city centre'!

Press conferences

- A news conference or press conference is a media event staged by an individual or group who wishes to attract media coverage for something claimed to have news value.
- Only hold a press conference if you are sure that you have news.
- A well-run press conference will be short, clear and well presented and convey clear newsworthy information to the media.

2.3.4 Improving the ongoing dissemination of development information

While specific events and topical issues can be promoted with press conferences and press releases, there is also need to provide ongoing information to the Media. This information can help the media become more informed and therefore cover development issues better. This process can be done in a number of ways but we provide recommendations for websites and newsletters.

Websites

Effective websites are a potentially important resource for journalists. The internet provides an important, if currently underused, resource for journalists investigating stories and topics. Unfortunately the websites of many organisations are work in progress or are not regularly updated. An effective website should be part of an effective communication strategy for an organisation that is taking seriously development communication and linking to the media.

An effective website is one that:

- Is quick and easy to open i.e. well designed with low graphics. Journalists in Uganda often work with slow internet connections.
- Includes background information on the topics so that those without prior knowledge can understand the basics of the issues being discussed.
- Is regularly updated. This includes placing press releases and other reports immediately onto the page since journalists cannot wait for the report for days after an event or the news has broken.
- Has a specific page for media that will include past press releases.
- Includes useful links for further information.

For larger organisations, it is extremely useful for the broadcast media to have access to audio and video information where possible. Where appropriate, a website should include information on audio and video materials available and even have some sound or video files that can be downloaded by the media houses.

Newsletters

Newsletters are often used by development organisations but are usually targeted at the staff, associates and key stakeholders (including donors) of the project or organisation. While the Media are often included on the circulation list, development newsletters are not specifically aimed towards or written for the Media. In the words of one journalists 'most newsletters are put straight in the bin... because many are just promotion and few have anything newsworthy within them'. While it would make little sense to suggest that development organisations change the focus of newsletters and write them specifically for the media, there are some changes that could be made to make development newsletters more useful to the Media and perhaps more useful and interesting to other readers as well:

- The more widely applicable news needs to be clearly separated from the organisational news and information. The media will not want to read through sad farewells for staff or descriptions of staff parties to extract the relevant information.
- There should be a summary of key points that are of particular interest to a wider audience. This summary should be at the start and link the reader to the relevant article/section of the newsletter.

- The news values should be kept in mind when writers prepare the articles and the 'inverted pyramid' approach of placing the most interesting points at the start of an article should be adhered to. Many busy readers, including the Media and donors will often only skim read the first couple of paragraphs of an article.
- Development agency staff writing about projects is much less credible than actual examples and testimonials from those who have benefited from the project. Quotes from beneficiaries and contacts to these people will therefore make articles much more credible with the Media.
- Articles should include names and telephone contacts for further information on the subject/ issue covered. Treat each newsletter as a stand alone publication and do not assume readers have been reading or archiving past newsletters
- Weblinks should be included for additional background information.

Ongoing Communication

- Continuous communication with the media helps journalists better understand and cover development issues.
- Make sure your website is up-to-date and informative.
- Modify newsletters such that the media can clearly identify sections that are newsworthy. Include contact information of writers.

2.3.5 Giving time to and preparing for media interviews

Journalists will contact your organisation following press conferences or, sometimes, out of the blue for comments and interviews. At present many development organisations are unprepared for such contacts and requests for interviews. Sometimes journalists are blocked from speaking to potential informants by secretaries. Sometimes junior people are asked to act as spokespeople. These situations break down a potential or existing relationship with the media and may result in the media not seeking your point of view when it really matters. Being willing to speak to and be interviewed by the media is an important part of a strategy to engage more effectively with the media.

Preparing for an interview

Being prepared for the interview is critical. Here are some tips for preparing for a media interview.

- **Communication points:** Prepare two to three of the most important ideas or communication points that you want to convey.
- **Typed summary:** Prepare a typed summary of the issue you want to convey to give to the journalist after the interview
- **Sound bites:** To be quoted, prepare possible sound bites. Explain yourself in a concise but dramatic, picturesque or novel way.
- **Checklist of questions:** Make a checklist of the questions you anticipate. Brainstorming with your colleagues can help you anticipate issues and questions that may arise during the interview. Be prepared to use those issues to launch your communication points.
- **Research:** Know your subject matter well and memorize key information.

Tips for being interviewed

- Make short, simple, and specific statements.
- Explain your most important points first.
- Don't stray from the topic.
- Summarize and then elaborate.
(Example: "This will have a negative impact on the livelihoods of thousands of people in Uganda. Let me explain what I mean...").
- Give proof. Use facts, examples, anecdotes, quotes, and stories. People remember what affects them, what motivates them, and what others experiences are. Word pictures such "as big as a bus" rather than just "big" are what people recall.



Even simple statistics can be difficult to understand

Simple statistics can be difficult to understand and a simple comparison can lead to much better understanding. For example 'the egg of the insect is approximately 0.25mm, or in other words, about the size of a full stop put at the end of a sentence.'

- Pause after complete statements. The interviewer will appreciate those breaks during the editing process (radio and TV).
- When you feel you have answered the question adequately, do not feel compelled to keep talking simply because the interviewer has a microphone held up to your mouth. If you are satisfied with your answer, sit in silence. Rambling may lead you to say the wrong thing.
- Do not say the reporter's name in the middle of the sentence; do not use paraphrases like "as I explained earlier." The reporter's name and the phrase will be difficult to edit and the audience may not know what you and the reporter have discussed previously, and may not understand what you are referring to (radio and TV).
- Think before you speak. Avoid fillers such as uh, ah, well, yeah, and you know (radio and TV).
- Respond to negative questions with positive responses.
- Always tell the truth, your credibility is crucial.
- Avoid "off the record." If you say something to a reporter, expect that it will end up in print. If you don't want it printed, don't say it.
- Avoid "no comment" answers. It sounds as if you have something to hide.
- Have a sense of humour.



The Games Interviewers Play

Some interviewers can be hostile; others are just uninformed. Do not get caught in an emotional or intellectual game with the interviewer. Following are some "interviewer types" and question traps and some responses you might want to try.

Interview type	Possible responses
Machine Gunner. Asks so many questions you do not know which one to answer first.	"Well, you have asked several interesting questions. First I'd like to address ..."
Interrupter. Jumps in before you have had a chance to complete your response.	Let him complete the interruption, then say: "Before I answer that, I would like to complete my thought..."
Paraphraser. Tries to put words in your mouth. "Do you mean to sit there and tell me that there is no problem with ..."	"No Sarah, this isn't what I said. What I said was..." and repeat your point.
Unprepared Interviewer. May have vague question or require you to provide a lot of background before you can get to your key message.	Take the opportunity to steer the interview in the direction you want to. Rephrase the question to make it more specific. "By your question, I think you are referring to ... let me put that in perspective."

Strategies for handling "question traps"

- **Either/Or.** Do not get trapped into answering either or questions. When the answer is not "black and white," say so.
- **Absent party.** Don't get trapped into being a spokesperson for another individual, business or organisation or into criticising an absent person or organisation.
- **False statement.** Correct wrong information immediately. Don't repeat the misinformation; this only reinforces it.
- **Hypothetical.** You do not have to answer a question that is hypothetical or conditional. It presents a scenario that never occurred

Let's talk

For any recorded interview (radio or television) the impact of your spoken message depends on how you say it. The sound of your voice determines how well you hold the audience's attention. The ability to speak well can be cultivated through practice. Common problems involve **pitch, rate and articulation.**

- Pitch problems often pertain to the habit of inflecting up at the ends of sentences. This makes everything you say sound like a question and undermines your authority. You sound more assertive if you lower your pitch and inflect downwards.
- Do you speak too fast or too slow? The speed that you talk is your speaking rate. While sprinting through your message may leave listeners behind, talking too slowly may bore them.
- You will make a better impression on your audience if you are articulate. This does not mean getting rid of your natural accent but rather vocalizing the words distinctly when you speak.

Looking the part

For TV, appearance is critical. Television viewers will judge your authority and trustworthiness by the substance of your message and the style in which you deliver this message. However, your appearance must also match viewer expectations.

Clothing: Dress appropriately: formal for formal settings, casual for field settings. Solid colours are the best. Avoid white and total black. Do not wear stripes or loud prints or flashy, shiny fabrics.

Jewellery: Wear only a few pieces and avoid chunky, shiny or dangling jewellery (shiny jewellery may reflect studio lights, dangling jewellery can rub against clip-on microphones).



Make-up: Aim for a “natural” look. A woman’s “every day” makeup should be fine.

Enthusiasm: Smile and be animated. Use gestures, facial expressions, and body language to add vitality to your words. However, be careful not to overdo it.

Body Language

- Look at the interviewer, not the camera. Glances up or to the side make you appear untrustworthy.
- Sit still in your chair. Rocking or swivelling can take you out of a cameraperson’s shot.
- Don’t look at notes during an interview, although you can refer to them if you get “stuck.”
- Stay seated when the interview is over. You might still be on camera and trip over a wire or do something else awkward.

Interviews

- Being willing to speak to and be interviewed by the media is an important part of a strategy to engage more effectively with the media.
- Being prepared for the interview is critical.
- There are clear and proven ways of turning interviews with bad or aggressive interviewers into an effective interview.
- For any recorded interview (radio or television) the impact of your spoken message depends on how you say it. Pitch, rate and articulation are specific factors that are important to control.
- Appearance, clothing and body language are very important for television appearances.

ANNEX 1

Sample Press Release



PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release 24th October 2005

Development organizations contribute to poor coverage of development in the Ugandan media

Development organizations in Uganda are not using the media effectively. A lack of understanding of the media, an unwillingness to interact effectively with the media and the overuse of purchased newspaper space and radio /TV airtime by Development organizations is undermining the potential role that the mass media can play in development in Uganda.

These are the findings laid out in a paper 'Making Development Newsworthy: Getting development into the Ugandan Mass Media' that is being **launched on 27th October 2004**. The paper has been written by Owen Kibenge and Gavin Anderson of the International Labour Organisation's (ILO) FIT SEMA (Small Enterprise Media in Africa) Project. The 40 page paper is based on the experience of the authors, in-depth interviews and structured surveys with key players in development and the media in Uganda.

The paper is targeted at professionals in the Development industry. According to co-author Owen Kibenge: *'This paper highlights that there is an extremely poor working relationship between professionals in the media and development. Neither side respects the other'*. The paper backs up this assertion of lack of respect between the two with findings of a survey undertaken in September 2004.

Survey findings: The Development perspective on the media

- 75% of Development professionals view the media as unprofessional

-MORE-

- 85% of Development professionals view media coverage of development as either poor or very poor.
- 80% of media professionals say they have been misquoted in the Ugandan media.

Survey findings: The Media perspective on development

- Media professionals rated Development Agencies and NGOs as the least newsworthy source of information for journalists behind government, politicians and private companies
- 60% of media professionals stated that Development agencies understand the media poorly.

Co-author Gavin Anderson noted that *'the ultimate losers are ordinary Ugandans who could benefit from much more effective coverage of development issues.'*

This paper highlights that the poor coverage of Development Issues in the Ugandan Media is both a result of weaknesses within the media itself and poor interaction and use of the media by development organizations.

The paper makes clear recommendations to development organizations to address the problem. These include building an effective network of journalists, preparing newsworthy press releases, running effective press conferences, making newsletters and websites more useable by journalists and preparing effectively for interviews in the media.

This paper is to be launched at 12 noon on Wednesday 27th October at the end of a half day workshop at the Grand Imperial Hotel, Kampala. This workshop will bring development professionals together with representatives of the media to identify ways in which media coverage of income generation, small business and private sector development can be improved in Uganda.

-ENDS-

The authors of the paper are available and willing to be interviewed. See the attached profile and contact details.

MAKING DEVELOPMENT NEWSWORTHY

By mid-2004, the majority of Ugandans had access to information in their local languages with 84 radio stations broadcasting throughout Uganda in over 25 languages. This, with 3 daily newspapers and 5 television stations, means there is significant scope for development and media to work together to reach ordinary Ugandans, policy makers, and donors. More importantly, once properly engaged and used as a vehicle for two-way communication, the media can strengthen development efforts as listeners debate and reflect. This paper argues that Development is missing this major opportunity for effective engagement with the Ugandan media. Unfortunately, development has allowed weaknesses within the Ugandan media to blind it to recognizing the media as a development partner—a partner that can enhance the outreach, effectiveness and local understanding and ownership of development projects.

This paper serves as a guide for Development officials to engage more effectively with the Ugandan media. It provides both an explanation of the existing situation of Development-media interaction and effective strategies for improving this interface such that development efforts are more widely understood, are more responsive and have a greater impact.

Part One stimulates discussion as it outlines weaknesses in the current Development-media relationship. Part Two provides constructive suggestions for interacting effectively with radio, print, and television media.

This paper has been prepared by International Labour Organisation (ILO) FIT SEMA (Small Enterprise Media in Africa). This is a project funded by the Swedish International Development Co-operation Agency (Sida) that aims to build the capacity of the Ugandan mass media to report on and cover issues related to income generation and small business.

Illustrations by Masoud

Design by ACHA GRAPHICS

