# The Print Media and Conflict Resolution in Northern Uganda

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## Abstract

This article reviews the role of the print media in conflict resolution. Using Northern Uganda as a case study, the article seeks to demonstrate that the press can effectively be used either to fuel conflict in a region or to reduce conflict in a region. The article seeks to demonstrate the role played by the print media in conflict and conflict resolution in Northern Uganda. It discusses the role of the press in Uganda, traces the roots of the problem in Northern Uganda, describes the methodology used in gathering data for the study and presents the results obtained from the study, which was conducted in 2001. Finally, the article has identified specific recommendations which if implemented can be used to address the on-going conflict in Northern Uganda.

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## Introduction

Information has always been a basis for knowledge; and the latter is power (Hameso 1995). Lack of information contributes to knowledge deficiency, which leads to powerlessness. Therefore, access to information implies a form of empowerment, or better still, it signifies freedom from ignorance, freedom from servitude and ultimately freedom to choose. Just as information, or freedom of information, is useful to post-modernist society, it is equally vital for rural African societies, which account for more than seventy percent of the whole population in most of the countries (Hameso 1995). Everywhere, therefore, there is a need for the public and private provision of information, especially data relating to matters that directly affect the livelihood of people, such as health, education, basic product prices, politics and government policies. Unfortunately, however, lack of freedom to provide information is what characterises most of Africa. Under situations where freedom of information is resisted and where politics are not transparent, social evils such as corruption, abuse of power and violation of fundamental human rights cannot be exposed, and perhaps, will never be rectified. This article seeks to demonstrate the role played by the print media in conflict and conflict resolution in Northern Uganda. It discusses the role of the press in Uganda, traces the roots of the problem in Northern Uganda, describes the methodology used in gathering data for the study and presents the results obtained from the study, which was conducted in 2001.

## Freedom of the Press in Uganda

According to Kitchen (1956), attempts in Uganda to disseminate information through the newspaper can be traced back to 1907, when *Ebifa Mu Uganda* (News from Uganda), made its appearance as a fortnightly missionary newspaper. Other early publications include *Muno* (The Friend), a weekly publication founded in 1911, and *The Uganda Herald*, founded in 1912. *Matalisi* (The Messenger) followed in 1923, *Gambuze* (What is the News) in 1927, *Dobozi Lya Buganda* (Voice of Uganda) in 1927, *Mugobasonqa* (Followers of Reason) in 1948, *Ndimugezi* (The Wise Seek Advice) in 1951, *Amut* (News) in 1953, *Mwebingwa* in 1953, *Uganda Empya* (News Uganda) in 1953, *Saben's Commercial Digest* in 1954, *Uganda Mail* in 1954, and *Uganda Post* in 1954. *Uganda Argus*, founded in 1955, originated from *The East*

*African Standard* which started publication in 1902, but with its circulation restricted mainly to Kenya, and *Uganda Eyogera* (Uganda Speaks). Among the East African British territories, Uganda can pride itself on having the highest literacy rate, considering the sizeable reading public. During the colonial period, there was a lack of a powerful English language press, and this encouraged the development of an aggressive and enterprising indigenous vernacular press in Uganda (Kitchen 1956). By 1970, there were 1,29 million pupils attending school, and by 1982 there was an increase of 37 per cent (44 per cent boys and 31 per cent girls) (*Europa Year Book* 1987). The adult literacy rate in 1995 was 61,8 per cent, and by 2000 it had grown to 65 per cent. These figures indicate the increase in the ability of the people to be able to read and write in the newspapers, and other print media.

Historically, the European element was represented by the *Uganda Herald*, which was first published in 1912. The Europeans claimed with some pride that this was the first newspaper of any kind to be published in Uganda. Wilcox (1975) was right when he said the colonial power strongly influenced the development of the press in Africa, Uganda included, by introducing a rather authoritarian press concept and restricting the growth of the indigenous press. They did this because they believed that the other papers did not carry information of their interest.

The Roman Catholic Church and the Church Missionary Society did publish and circulate some newspapers such as *Ebifa Mu Uganda* and *Muno*, first published in 1907 and 1911, respectively. These papers had a good deal of influence through their relatively large circulation of religious issues and matters of political and general public interest. There were high standards set in the production of these newspapers. According to Kitchen (1956), there were, however, no government newspapers or those under the direct supervision of the government as in Kenya and Tanzania (formally Tanganyika). This left provision for the free expression of information.

Today the major newspapers in Uganda include the *Daily Monitor*, which began after *The Weekly Topic* (founded in 1986) stopped publication, *The New Vision* (a daily newspaper founded in 1986), *Munno* (a daily newspaper in Luganda founded in 1911), *Taifa Uganda Empya* (a daily newspaper in Luganda founded in 1953), *The Star* (a daily newspaper founded in 1980), *Ngabo* (a daily newspaper in Luganda founded in 1979), *The Citizens* (a daily newspaper published by the Democratic Party), and *Munnansi* (a weekly newspaper in Luganda founded in 1980). There are also three other weekly newspapers, *Focus* (a weekly newspaper founded in 1983), *Independent*

*Observer* (a bi-weekly newspaper founded in 1988) and *Mulengera* (a weekly newspaper in Luganda). And finally, the two papers specialising in economic news: *The Financial Times* (a daily business paper) and *The Economy* (a weekly business paper).

Although the National Resistance Movement (NRM) government has permitted far greater freedom of speech than its predecessors, Drost (1996) points out that the government has not hesitated to act against journalists who overstep the mark, for instance by publishing sensitive information which may be considered to endanger the armed forces. Unlike the previous government, NRM has preferred to use legal sanctions rather than resort to arbitrary detention. The majority of the cases brought against journalists have either been dropped or resulted in acquittal.[1]

Despite these positive developments, the Ugandan government continues to detain and charge journalists under 'repressive sedition' and 'publishing false news' legislation, causing journalists to practice self-censorship. The paradoxical contrast in Uganda between a vocal and diverse press and the regular arrests and prosecutions of leading media figures results in part from the draconian press laws that remain on the books despite the constitutionally guaranteed right to freedom of the press. Some of the laws used to prosecute journalists, such as the law on seditious libel, date back to the colonial era. The sedition statutes give the government brutal powers to arrest and prosecute journalists who raise the government's ire, as demonstrated in the cases outlined below. In 1995, the Press and Journalists Law came into effect after its adoption by the non-elected National Resistance Council. The law requires all journalists to be licensed, and provides for a Media Council which monitors and disciplines journalists and editors. Although the Media Council is empowered to arbitrate disputes between the media and the State, to discipline journalists, and 'to regulate the conduct and promote good ethical standards and discipline of journalists', the government rarely resorts to the Council for the resolution of disputes with the media, preferring to rely on more severe criminal sanctions (Press and Journalist Statute 1995: section 10, no 6).

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1    Offences under the penal code with which journalists have been charged include 'sedition and false news, criminal libel and treason' (Drost 1996). An amendment to the penal code introduced in 1988 allows the prosecution of anyone publishing information that is likely to 'endanger the armed forces'. This has made the press fearful of publishing information on issues touching on national security.

Wolfsfeld (1997) explains that the military as an institution believes in a culture of secrecy. This philosophy has passed into the Uganda style of ruling. Agreeing with Wolfsfeld, Onadipe and Lord (1999) also assert that, with the military in place, there is not much encouragement of transparency or freedom of press where the armed forces are concerned. This also affects the relationship between the media and the government.

Mutua (2001) argues that every morning in Africa, millions of people wake up and tune to government controlled radio stations and listen to the news on Africa, which is constantly interrupted by messages which support what are mostly authoritarian leaderships. Those who are lucky to read newspapers open pages of print from journalists working for their government or journalists terrified of their government (Mutua 2001). Many believe that the radio and the newspapers are never wrong! Those slightly sceptical of their local sources of information tune to short-wave bands and listen to the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), the Voice of Germany or the Voice of America. These foreign agencies tell the Africans what the West thinks of Africans and what Africans should think of the West and subsequently what Africans should think of themselves. The press in Africa is very powerful and journalists should realise that whatever they offer their viewers, listeners and readers is absorbed as heavenly truth.

The Uganda Journalists Association Code of Professional Conduct (1996) states that journalists should at all times strive to separate their own opinions from factual news. Where personal opinions are expressed, the readers should be made to know this in no uncertain terms. Editorialisation which departs from the truth undermines the cardinal principles of journalism and subverts the confidence the public puts in journalists.

## Causes of Conflict in Northern Uganda

The conflict in Northern Uganda can be attributed to several factors. According to Museveni, who among his other functions is the chief spokesman for the NRM, the initial reason for the conflict in Northern Uganda was that the Acholi and Langi communities were deprived of their ability to get rich from looting other Ugandans. Museveni (1997:178) further states that: 'It was purely tribal opportunism that brought such numbers (50 000) of people to their side. In other words, the reason why those rebels in the north, organized on a tribal basis, were fighting for control of the national

government was that the NRM as a government had stopped them from looting.' Thus, in the beginning, the NRM saw the initial causes of the war as resource-related. The issue was who would be the primary beneficiary of Uganda's wealth.

Others in the NRM have acknowledged the importance of the issue of power. In an interview entitled 'Museveni's regime under attack' (1995), which was conducted by the Uganda Democratic Coalition (UDC) newsletter reporters, the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) rebel spokesperson outlined their reasons for the on-going conflict in Northern Uganda, which started in 1986. They regarded President Museveni as a self-imposed dictator, denying Ugandans their civil and human rights, selling Uganda to foreign exploiters, making Uganda a colony of the Tutsi who have turned Ugandan citizens into foreigners in their own country, resisting the people's demands for multi-party democracy and a federal system, concocting a constitution which is intended to legitimise his brand of dictatorship, committing mass murders of innocent people in Northern and Eastern Uganda, and turning Uganda into a terrorist camp where he trains and supports guerrilla forces against neighbouring countries.

Okumu (1997) identified the following as causes of this conflict. There was the mistrust when Museveni first failed to keep the peace agreement signed between his National Resistance Army (NRA) guerrillas and the Ugandan government. Then, under the leadership of Tito Okello, there was mistreatment of former soldiers and grievances among certain groups of people. To Okumu therefore, the war is basically due to misunderstanding and mishandling of the situation (Okumu 1997). The persistent rebel activities in Northern Uganda have left the region in a state of crisis and turmoil. Despite several attempts by the government to stamp out this conflict, the LRA, often referred to as the 'Kony rebels', have also persisted, never strong enough to seriously destabilise the government, but never weak enough to die out completely (Human Rights Watch/Africa 1997).

The conflict in Northern Uganda also involves Sudan. The Sudanese Government spokesperson has repeatedly accused the Ugandan Government of providing military support to the rebel Sudanese People's Liberation Army (SPLA). The Sudanese government therefore began to aid the LRA, relying on them to help fight the SPLA. This aid has turned the LRA into more of a threat than ever, since the rebels are now armed with land mines and machine guns in place of rifles, machetes and stones.

## Statement of the problem

The civil strife both in the northern and western parts of Uganda has continued to take its toll, both in economic and humanitarian terms, while dialogue and reconciliation have kept eluding the country. Uganda has witnessed 15 years of conflict involving armed rebellion for most of the Northern Region, especially Acholiland (Gulu and Kitgum). The people of Northern Uganda have been deprived of their political, social, and economic development. There is hardly any peace in the land.

The human cost of the war has been huge. Thousands of people have been killed, maimed, injured, traumatised and displaced. Families have been broken and scattered. Hundreds of youths and children have fallen victim of rape, defilement, and abduction, and that has increased the risks of contracting diseases like HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases. There has been famine and malnourishment because the people were constantly on the run for their lives. Northern Uganda has suffered and is still suffering a great deal, making this helpless community a fertile ground for poverty, ignorance, and diseases.

With regard to the role of the media, different observations have been made. On the one hand, it has been said that the media, which could have played a crucial role in de-escalating the conflict, have been fuelling the conflict through their use of rumours and their dissemination of non-reliable information. On the other hand, it has been pointed out that the media coverage of the conflict in Northern Uganda has been limited. This could have been because the media were under instruction from the government not to cover events taking place there, or simply because they were not interested in covering matter relating to conflicts in the country.

What this study therefore seeks to establish, is whether the print media are fuelling and sustaining the present on-going conflict in Northern Uganda, and whether the same media can be utilised in resolving the conflict in the northern region of Uganda. Specifically, the researchers sought to:

1.  Determine the nature of coverage by the print media of information relating to conflict and conflict resolution in Northern Uganda;
2.  Assess the currency (in the sense of newness) of information published on conflict and conflict resolution in relation to the occurrence of these events;

3.    Obtain public opinion on the role of the media in disseminating information on conflict and conflict resolution in Northern Uganda.

Although conflict in the northern region of Uganda has been on and off since the country achieved independence in 1962, this study covers the 15 years from 1986 to 2000. 1986 was the year that the NRM government took power, which in effect gave birth to the current conflict in the northern part of Uganda. In the year 2000 the conflict in question was still going on, and the long period of conflict was becoming still longer. Geographically, this study was restricted to Northern Uganda, which includes Gulu, Kitgum, Apac, Lira and Arua. These are the areas that have been badly hit and affected by the on-going conflict in the region. Other Northern Ugandan areas included in this study are Kotido, Moroto, Soroti, Kumi, Tororo, Moyo, Nebbi and Arua.

## Research Methodology

The basic method used in this study was that of secondary data content analysis. In this method, most often used to describe events or process in society,[2] the researcher is not responsible for the collection of the original data. In this study the indirect observational data were not only analysed, however, but also supplemented by the use of interviews.

The researchers used purposive selective sampling based on their knowledge of the newspapers published in Uganda to choose the newspaper samples for content analysis. Due to time and financial constraints, only two were selected: *The Weekly Topic/Daily Monitor*, a privately owned newspaper, and *The New Vision*, a government-owned paper. The reason for choosing these newspapers is that the topic under investigation requires an examination of past events, and the papers chosen have been in publication since 1986, and throughout the period covered by the study. Another reason for choosing these two newspapers is that their readership is nationwide[3] as compared with the others, which are mainly regional.

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2    Soderlund and Carmen (1990:45-53) and Wolfsfeld (1997), both used content analysis to examine the volume of coverage of the information content, while studying the El Salvador Civil War, and the conflict over the Oslo Accords, the Intifada War and the Gulf War, respectively.

Content analysis has helped the researchers to identify, enumerate, and analyse occurrences of information on conflict resolution in Northern Uganda embedded in communication articles of *The Monitor* and *The New Vision* newspapers. The population for this study was approximately 10 220 newspaper issues, based on a collection of the weekly and daily publications of *The Weekly Topic/Daily Monitor* and *The New Vision* over 15 years. Sampling was done randomly by years and months. The years selected were 1995, 1996, 1998, 1999 and 2000. The months selected varied from year to year, since they were randomly selected. However, each month selected was the same for both newspapers. Four months in a year were selected, and were all considered in this study.

There was a number of other newspapers that were also published in Uganda as shown above, but they have not been included in this study because of the following reasons:

1.     The circulation of most if not all of these other papers is limited to particular geographical areas, and as a result, their readership too was limited.
2.     Some of these other papers are mostly written in local languages, which, creates barriers for their use in the other regions.
3.     The content of the information items was also limited to particular regions.

*Rupiny*, the sister newspaper published in Luo, was purposely left out, on account of the fact that *The New Vision* would have reported on the same or similar events concerning conflict resolution in Northern Uganda.

The information collected was on peaceful means of resolving conflict, the escalation of conflict, and other information that was neither on resolution of conflict nor on escalation of conflict, yet had something to do with the situation in Northern Uganda. The researchers specifically sought items that contained news or feature stories on conflict and conflict resolution in Northern Uganda, editorials on conflict and conflict resolution in Northern Uganda, opinion columns on conflict and conflict resolution in Northern Uganda and letters on conflict and conflict resolution in Northern Uganda.

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3     *The New Vision* newspaper, for instance, has been translated into four other languages: Luo (*Rupiny*), Iteso (*Etop*), Luganda (*Bukedde*), and Runyangkole-Rukiga (*Orumiri*). For this study however, only the English version was taken into account.

Interviews were conducted as a follow up to the content analysis. Interviews were held with readers of these newspapers based in Kampala and Gulu. This helped the researchers to establish the general views of the public about the role of the print media relating to the creation and sustenance of conflict, and the possible role in resolving conflict. The views of the publishing staff from both newspapers were also collected and they helped to establish the sources and nature of the information published. The interview was used here because this study was based on recalls of past events, and the researchers were able to probe best through the use of interviews. The interviews on the political issues in Uganda were carried out with the editors, sub-editors, and the journalists from both *The Monitor* and *The New Vision*.

A quota sampling technique, Purposive or Judgmental sampling, was used in this study to choose the sample, since interviews were merely supplementing the main research method of content analysis. A population of 70 newspaper readers who read both *The Monitor* and *The New Vision* was selected for inclusion in the sample. The 70 respondents were taken from the following categories: Makerere University students, Makerere University lecturers, business managers, political and opinion leaders, Church leaders, Local Council leaders (LCs) and members of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) who are based either in Gulu or in Kampala. The researchers also used proportionate quota sampling to pick samples from the reader population.

## Summary of Findings

The major findings, identified from the content analysis of data from the newspapers and the interviews conducted with the media personnel, are the following.

Firstly, this study has established that the print media has a role to play in challenging and advising the belligerents in Northern Uganda on the inhuman acts and strategies taking place, by prominently publishing information on escalating conflict, peaceful means of resolving conflict, and related issues. The study has shown that the most important items are published on the front and editorial pages, since these are the areas which capture the interest of readers. According to the data collected from the newspaper contents, *The Monitor* had more information items located on the front pages than *The New Vision*, which suggests that *The Monitor* takes information on conflict and conflict resolution more seriously than *The New Vision*.

Secondly, the study has also established that *The New Vision*, which is a government owned paper, has been more consistent in its publication of information on conflict and conflict resolution in Northern Uganda than *The Monitor*, which is a privately owned paper. This view was also supported by interviews conducted among the journalists, reporters and editors working on political issues. *The New Vision* seemed to enjoy protection from the government, which has contributed to their consistency in the publication of material, as compared with *The Monitor*.

Thirdly, after tabulating, analysing and discussing the data, the study has shown that *The Monitor*, which is privately owned, had published more reports related to resolving the on-going conflict than *The New Vision*, which is government owned (291 and 252, respectively). At the same time, these data indicate that both papers are actively involved in the publication of information on conflict and conflict resolution in Northern Uganda. Moreover, this study has revealed that the newspaper readers are indeed aware of the conflict and the conflict resolution process in Northern Uganda. Out of the 70 respondents interviewed, 34 (48,6 per cent) indicated that individuals, churches, NGOs, the government and international bodies have made several attempts towards peaceful resolution of the conflict. Sad to say, none of these efforts has led to the cessation of conflict in Northern Uganda.

Fourthly, this study has also established that the media actually do suffer from different forms of victimisation or persecution – such as warning, arrest, harassment, assault, court proceedings and imprisonment by the government – due to the publication of information that is deemed to be contrary to the government's view. The study has demonstrated that journalists from *The Monitor* face a lot more victimisation or persecution for reporting on conflict in Northern Uganda than their counterparts from *The New Vision*.

Fifthly, the study has also revealed that for news items on conflict and conflict resolution in Northern Uganda, the print media rely heavily on information obtained from victims or witnesses. Other sources also used included the government security forces and correspondents who responded to the information obtained in *The Monitor* and *The New Vision*. It is noted, however, that these newspapers do not have much information from the opposition (the rebels).

Finally, *The New Vision* newspaper, which is government owned, published more information items on conflict escalation and peaceful means than the privately owned *Monitor* newspaper. *The Monitor* in turn published more information on 'other' issues, which resulted in a higher number of published

items in *The Monitor* (291) than in *The New Vision* (252). On the whole, these newspapers contributed more to the escalation of conflict than to its resolution.

## Recommendations

This study has identified some elements, which are prerequisites for a successful utilisation of the print media in improving its role in the resolution of the ongoing conflict in Northern Uganda. These recommendations include: privatisation of the media, freedom of expression, enabling laws to enforce media freedom in the army, and publication of factual information. Each of these issues is discussed separately below.

### Privatisation of the media

This study recommends that all media be privatised, so that there is fair reporting, probably with less interference and censorship from the government and other political bodies. This would create competition in the field of media production and greatly improve the quality, and currency of the information disseminated, not only on conflict but also on other related issues. In this way, the media will not have to depend entirely on the government as source of their information (Liebes 1997). The continuous dependence on the government as the main source of information makes it difficult for the media to provide an independent voice. The media therefore need to be privatised so that they can freely have access to information, which will give citizens a better chance to perform their role in an enlightened manner. In the Algerian press, for instance, media freedom hit a high point between 1989 and 1992, when a new constitution put an end to the country's single-party tradition and opened the door for democracy and press freedom throughout the nation. In 1990, journalists received a 'green light' for a private press when the Algerian government offered 30 months paid salary to any journalist who left the state media to pursue a media venture of his own. The state even offered workspace and reduced printing costs (International Crisis Group 1998).

### Freedom of information

Freedom of information is an important element of the international guarantee of freedom of expression, which includes the right to seek and receive as well as to impart information and ideas. In most countries, the need for legislation, which will ensure the free flow of information, is obvious.

In Uganda, freedom of press has been hindered by the fact that freedom of information is not necessarily guaranteed (The Human Rights Reports 1998). This study recommends that the government of Uganda reconsider its position on censorship of the media, as this practice contradicts the fundamental rights embodied in the Uganda Constitution, which allows freedom of speech and expression. Removing the threat of censorship will enable the media to voice different political opinions and also to make the opinions of the citizens known to the public.

## Enabling laws to enforce media freedom

Uganda's constitution provides for freedom of the press, and the government has generally respected these rights. The Press and Media Law, which took effect in 1995, requires journalists to be licensed and to meet certain standards, including holding a university degree. The law provides for a Media Council to suspend newspapers and to deny access to state information (US Department of State 1999). The government has not vigorously enforced these laws, however, and its provisions had not been used against any journalist in its first three years (US Department of State 1999). It is believed, however, that many journalists would rather go to court than to the Council when dealing with complaints, which throws doubt upon the Council's authority (Wamboka 1999).

This study, therefore, recommends that certain laws, such as the Law on Sedition and Publication of False News and the Press and Media Law mentioned above, be removed from the Penal Code Act to give reporters and journalists freedom to write and express themselves without fear. Moreover, there is the need to eliminate any acts of controlling the free flow of information like censorship, which threatens the Ugandan journalists. The future of freedom of press in Uganda has to be secured.

## Training and education

This study has further noted that, because the processes of information gathering and communicating are complex and ever changing, journalists need to constantly sharpen and up-grade their skills. Onadipe and Lord (1999) indicate that the training needs vary enormously between individuals, but some basic categories in writing and editing skills, basic news values, coverage planning, interviewing and investigative techniques, photojournalism, layout, programme editing for electronic journalists, media ethics, conflict management techniques, legal frameworks, marketing and distribution are

necessary. With many of the basic skills lacking, more specialised tasks suffer, such as political reporting, conflict reporting, legal affairs, financial and economic reporting, and social development reporting.

In Uganda, very few journalists have had exposures to any kind of war reporting training, instruction on how to protect themselves and their sources in a conflict situation, instruction on how humanitarian law and human rights law should apply in conflicts and how conflict resolution theory and practice can be of relevance to the media and the events they are covering (Onadipe and Lord 1999). This study has also revealed that training and education can play a substantial role in catalysing changes at the deepest level for the media. It is easy to change external factors, like behaviour and structure, but it is far more difficult and challenging to transform unseen internal values and beliefs. The development of appropriate skills and knowledge can therefore help the media people to become key agents of change.

This study therefore recommends that journalists and media personnel should be trained and educated specifically in the areas of conflict and war reporting, to enable them improve in this field. This could involve working with local groups and local media in planning and producing community public affairs programming aimed at issues such as development or reconstruction priorities, inter-group relations, reconciliation, local governance and public participation issues, conflict and conflict resolution.

## Professional workshops, seminars and conferences

One vehicle for improving professional output is focused training through workshops which reach substantial numbers of media practitioners. Integrating professional skills training – on collecting, editing, and disseminating information – with discussion and hands-on work experience with substantive policy issues – such as election or constitutional coverage, governance issues and developmental priorities and practices – can be a very effective training method.

The structure of workshop sessions, as discussed by Onadipe and Lord (1999), could depend on a range of variables such as the number of media participants, existing skill levels, availability and interest, the range of subject matter to be discussed, and the possibility of further training in particular areas – all of which would be determined at the planning stages with major input from potential participants.

One important aspect of the workshop approach to training is the need for follow-up and refinement of lessons learned when the media practitioner is

back on the job. To provide continuity and support in the workplace one possible option is the establishment of mentoring systems, whereby senior practitioners agree to be 'on-call' to provide professional advice and constructive criticism to a number of junior colleagues. This could involve overseeing their output, transmitting their own skills, and suggesting areas for further development related to previous training. This kind of on the job support could provide continuity and reinforcement of the initial training and a means of monitoring its impact and shortcomings.

There is need for enhancing the professional level of journalists and people working in the media especially in Uganda. Joining professional workshops, seminars and academic programme in the field of journalism can help to attain this.

Workshops can also provide opportunities for bringing together professionals from different areas within the country and within regions to share experiences and broaden their knowledge of relevant professional and contextual developments. International participation of trainers and other specialised resource persons is also a means of improving comparative information sharing, international networking and broadening the perspectives and knowledge base of local practitioners and the outside specialists.

This study therefore, recommends that Ugandan journalists and media personnel organise frequent workshops, seminars, and other academic programmes, where they can always come together and discuss and share different view points in order to try and improve in the coverage, printing and publication on conflict and war reporting.

## International Community

The study noted that several attempts have been made towards the resolution of conflict in Northern Uganda but to no avail. Each time attempts are made, they have been frustrated by either the government or the rebels.

This study therefore, recommends that the government of Uganda calls on the International community to exert pressure on the Sudan President, Omar El Bashir, to use the Sudanese influence on Joseph Kony to conform to the peace process taking place. The international community should also actively encourage the resumption of the peace process which was started in 1994. Considerable interest in this notion has been encountered in the United States Government and diplomatic missions of other friendly countries, so the same could be done for Uganda. Sustained support for negotiations could be helpful to the leadership of the government and to others. Public media

attention to the northern conflict and to the negotiation process could have a positive effect. It could also help to assure the Acholi people that – contrary to the belief of many – the international community is, indeed, concerned with their problems.

## Non-Governmental Organisations
The study has noted that a number of NGOs have been involved in the rehabilitation and peace building in Northern Uganda. NGOs such as SCF-Denmark, UNICEF, ACORD, Human Rights Watch, GUSCO, some of which are currently providing rehabilitation programmes to the rescued and abducted children.

This study therefore, recommends that these NGOs should also help to facilitate a peace agreement. The Acholi people should be prepared to peacefully reintegrate the vast majority of LRA insurgents in their communities. The Catholic Church, the Church of Uganda, and Islamic leaders are well placed to support and initiate the peace and reconciliation process. These NGOs could also work together with the media to help achieve peace in this region.

## Resolving conflict in Northern Uganda
As part of a vibrant society concerned with the peaceful resolution of disputes predicted on the rule of law, common justice and people-centred security, the media has a role to play in providing channels of communication between the government and the governed, presenting fresh perspectives, and as a watchdog capable of sounding a genuine alarm. The study has noted the several attempts to resolve the conflict in Northern Uganda, which have always been frustrated by either the government or the rebels. The researchers in this case recommend that the media work together with the other conflict resolvers to be able fight together for peace and to achieve better results.

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