Dear readers,

Greetings from HRNJ-Uganda.

We are glad to introduce to you issue No.1 of the HRNJ-Uganda e-newsletter, January-June 2017.

The Issue highlights activities and achievements of the organization during the period of January to June 2017.

Among them were: four (4) capacity-building sessions on ethical codes and professionalism of journalists, 175 journalists benefited; four (4) community dialogues that enhanced the relationship between the media and the public; two (2) safety and security meetings for journalists; a Universal Peer Review (UPR) session that aimed at popularizing the UPR and drawing an action plan on how to implement the recommendations; field monitors training in Masaka with the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and 30 participants were empowered; strategic meetings for staff and board members; fact finding missions; and the radio talk shows.

In addition, HRNJ-Uganda legal programme represented 20 journalists in courts of law.

Kindly enjoy the reading.

Kind regards,

Mr. Ssempala Robert
Executive Director, HRNJ-Uganda

The launch of the Press Freedom Index report.


The colorful event was attended by 118 delegates from civil society organizations (CSOs), NGOs, development partners, media fraternity, police and the general public.

The report analyses the media regulatory regime and how it was manipulated to curtail media freedoms in Uganda. It also examines how facilitative the operating environment was to the practice of journalism in 2016. The index further discusses the extent to which law enforcement agencies held institutions and individuals accountable for violating journalists rights and interventions by government to enhance press freedom.

It also analyses the extent to which the legal regime and policy frameworks enhance media freedoms; the proposed bills and administrative instruments as well as their impact on the media environment; and the regulatory institutions and media managers have done to advance or curtail media freedoms in the country.

The report further captures data on a range of media violations including attacks on journalists from a wide scope of media actors; reporters, editors, producers, photographers, presenters and support team. It covers the whole country and all media platforms irrespective of ownership patterns.

For a detailed report visit the website at www.hrnjuganda.org.
HRNJ-Uganda Celebrates World Press Freedom Day

On 3rd May 2017, HRNJ commemorated the World Press Freedom day at Golf Course Hotel, Kampala.

The occasion was attended by over 100 people including representatives from NGOs, CSOs, development partners, journalists, police officers and the general public.

Among the activities during the celebrations was the Annual Journalist’s Award. Three awards were awarded out to the best male, female and media house. The objective of this award was to recognize the most outstanding in reporting on media rights. Subsequently Anthony Wesaka, Betty Ndagire from Daily Monitor Publications were awarded as the most outstanding in reporting on media rights. Similarly, Monitor Publications also scooped an award for the most outstanding media house in reporting frequently on media rights.

On 3rd November 2016 during Uganda’s 2nd peer review cycle in Geneva, 82 states made recommendations to Uganda, Uganda received 226 recommendations, accepted 143, 18 pending and 65 were noted. For this reason, HRNJ-Uganda had to convene a meeting to disseminate these recommendations that were on media rights and freedom of expression.

Strategic meetings continued...

All the four meetings aimed at developing work plans for the implementation of the project, assessing the preliminary needs, the requirements for activities lined and securing technical guidance from stakeholders. They were also targeted at evaluating the implemented activities and devising strategies of performing better.

H.E Mogens Pedersen the Danish Ambassador handing over an accolade to the best female journalist Betty Ndagire of Daily Monitor on the 3rd May 2017 while HRNJ-Uganda was commemorating World Press Freedom Day.

Members that attended the strategic meeting at the HRNJ-Uganda secretariat, Kampala.
Regional Trainings on ethical code and professionalism for journalists in Uganda.

With kind support from Democratic Governance Facility (DGF), HRNJ-Uganda’s project on ‘bolstering professional capacities to deter safety and security threats and risks, which focuses on creating a conducive operating environment for the media organized four regional trainings on ethical codes and professionalism for journalists in Uganda.

During the period of January –June; the project held regional trainings in Masaka, Fortportal, Kalangala and Moroto. The objective of the trainings was; to equip journalists with knowledge and skills on professionalism and ethical conduct; and to offer a training opportunity to beneficiaries of the TOT to share knowledge and best practices with fellow journalists in the regions respectively.

From 15th –17th February and 6th –7th March 2017, the regional trainings were held in Masaka and Fortportal respectively. A total of 100 participants were equipped in both trainings. Masaka, 50 participants,(15females and 35males); and Fortpotal; 50 participants, (20 females) and (30 males). The participants were both from print and electronic media.

In the regional trainings in Masaka and Fort-portal, the journalists enhanced professional skills and ethics. With peer learning applied as a mode of training (journalists training fellow journalists) the peer trainers were able to sharpen their training skills on the subject of ethical conduct and the beneficiaries acquiring important knowledge and skills in a simplified and appropriate way. The training journalists included; Abdullah Latiff Mukasa, Nkuba Samuel, Buyondo Davis, Eddy Bindhe, Henry Lubulwa, Patra Kirungi, Kyaligonza Edward, Hamilton Kalyegira and Ninsiima Enid.

The project further extended the regional training workshops in hard to reach areas of Karamoja and Kalangala. In Karamoja the training was held from 17th -19th May 2017, Seven Ranges hotel Moroto and 30 (13F and 17M) journalists from different media houses across the region attended. In Kalangala, it was held from the 23rd -26th May 2017 at Mirembe Resort Hotel, 25 (7F and 18M) journalists attended.

In the hard to reach regions, the trainings also equipped journalists with knowledge on ethical conduct and professionalism and also the National TOT graduates trained their colleagues on what they learnt in their week-long training.

In Moroto, the journalists quickly embraced the knowledge and shared their initial experiences in the field. It was realized that the threats on the lives of journalists especially from the security organs in the district have been quite high. The team agreed that a lot of threats emanated from their unknowingly unprofessional behaviors in the course of their work, especially while gathering, processing and publishing news.
HRNJ-Uganda reaches out to the community

Community Dialogues held

With kind support from the embassy of Finland, HRNJ-Uganda conducted four community dialogues in Arua, Gulu, Fortportal and Kabowa Rubaga division.

The dialogues were held on; Fort portal (8th March 2017); Arua (23rd March 2017); Gulu (29th March 2017); and Kabowa village, Rubaga division 11th April 2017.

The objective of the community dialogues was to enhance the relationship between media and the community and to understand the concerns of the public. HRNJ-Uganda also intended to create a platform for discourse between media and the public.

The four community dialogues drew over 500 participants and among them were; journalists from various media houses, religious leaders, representatives from NGOs, Uganda Human rights commission, political leaders, local leaders, teachers, commercial cyclists, market venders, government officials, resident commissioners, and HRNJ-Uganda staff members.

Some of the issues discussed include; the poor conduct of journalists, the unprofessionalism of journalists and media houses while doing their work, the wrong choice of language used by media houses, the poor relationship between police and the journalists, uninformed journalists on legal issues, the need for journalists to do substantive research, accurate reporting, and the need to stop partisan.

The journalists accepted the accusations from the participants and promised to improve on their ethical code and professionalism since they had acquired skills from HRNJ-Uganda trainings. The community and police officers also understood clearly the key roles of journalists and promised to work together peacefully for the betterment of society.
Safety and security meeting in Masaka

HRNJ-Uganda continues to progress as a Network that delivers on the protection, promotion of media freedoms and rights for Journalists. Currently in Uganda, human rights abuses and violations against journalists are escalating. The current environment threatens enjoyment of press freedom, freedom of expression and media rights.

Since January 2017, the organization has documented over 40 cases of attacks against journalists. The attacks range from assault, damage of work equipment and gadgets, detention, denial of access to information and kidnapping. This has made the practice of journalism in Uganda life-threatening.

In response, HRNJ-Uganda organized a two-day training session on safety and security at Garden Courts Hotel, Masaka. The event took place from 11th -12th May 2017. It drew 40 participants from Kampala, Masaka, Wasiko, Lyantonde, Rakai, Ssembabule, Mukono, Luwero and Mubende.

The aim of the training was to equip journalists with skills on safety and security, to strengthen linkages among journalists in the Central and Southern Region, and to create a platform for journalists to deliberate on common issues affecting the media.

The participants learnt a lot in the training and some of the concepts grasped include; key security concepts; gender and security issues; managing risks; attitudes about security; and risk assessment.

Field Monitors training in Masaka

HRNJ-Uganda through its mandate realized that Ugandan journalists continue to face many perils in their line of work, including physical assaults, arrests, detentions and damage to their equipment. In addition, many media houses face break-ins and closings as part of the intimidation tactics used by the state. The threat of constant danger makes it difficult for journalists to effectively do their work.

To this, HRNJ-Uganda organized a three day training for regional field monitors from 21st to 23rd June 2017 in Masaka Municipality. The training drew 30 participants including journalists and media rights workers. It aimed at equipping the field monitors with skills to monitor violations administered against journalists and the state of media freedom in the different parts of the country. The monitors will report the violations to HRNJ-Uganda as they emerge.

The training equipped and prepared participants with skills to recognize and report media rights violations in the different parts of the country in a timely manner.

Some of the issues highlighted in the training include; the concept of human rights; definition of human rights; types of human rights; freedom of expression; public freedoms, freedom of expression and the media, state obligations from human rights instruments, limitations of human rights among others.

Radio and TV talk shows

The organization conducted a number of radio and TV talk shows in the period of January to June 2017. The radio talk shows were conducted in the eastern (Jinja), central (Kampala), Masaka (southern), Western (Kabarole), West Nile (Arua), Northern (Gulu), and Central (Kampala) regions.

The TV talk shows were held on National television to address issues affecting journalists in the country ranging from safety, security, ethical conducts, human rights and others.

The radio talk shows were conducted in tandem with community meetings and aimed at engaging the public on the role of the media in shaping public opinion and narrative mainly in regard to good governance. The panelists tried to break down complex information into digestible pieces for everyone. The responses from the public through telephone calls indicated that there is a need to engage the public more and it was evident that if the public is sensitized about the role of the media, they can be the first defenders of media rights and seek for accountability and good governance from the leaders.
Legal Aid and support Programme

LEGAL REPRESENTATION

Under the legal aid and support programme, HRNJ-Uganda has continued to provide legal representation to journalists directly and indirectly in the courts of judicature.

During this period, four cases have been determined by courts of law and one dismissed for want of prosecution. On 16th March 2017, the Buganda Road chief magistrate, Karemani Jameson, acquitted four journalists of criminal defamation and convicted the source of defamatory information Ssegawa Tamale to a jail term of four months. Madina Nalwanga, Patrick Tumwesige of New Vision and Benon Tugumiisirize, Ronald Nahabwe formerly of Red Pepper were found not “criminally liable” for what was published and had no intention to defame the complainants Ephraim Ntaganda and Drake Lubega, both city tycoons.

On 10th March 2017, the Buganda Road Magistrate Gladys Kamasanyu convicted the former Division Police Commander of Old Kampala Police Station Joram Mwesigye of assault occasioning Actual Bodily Harm against Andrew Lwanga formerly working with WBS Television. Joram was sentenced to a fine of One million shillings and compensation of five million shillings. He was acquitted of malicious damage to property.

HRNJ played a vital role in exposing Lwanga’s plight through a press conference conducted on 13th January 2105 condemning Joram’s actions. This was followed by a peaceful procession to the Police Headquarters in Nagulu on the same day to present a petition to the IGP Kale Kayihura on the gross violations of journalists’ rights by errant police officers. The organization was also largely involved in mobilizing journalists to cover the proceedings in court. The legal team worked tirelessly with the State Attorney to ensure that Andrew gets justice.

On 15th March 2017, a business woman in Kayunga District, Naluwa Rose, was convicted and sentenced to a one year jail term by the Kayunga Grade One Magistrate Akello Irene for assaulting a Sauti FM journalist Mukiibi Sula.

Mukiibi was assaulted on 4th June 2015 by Naluwa Rose as he was covering a land wrangle in Kyampisi village Kayunga District.

Also on 29th March 2017, Five youth NRM party supporters were found guilty of assaulting three Entebbe-based journalists by the Entebbe Grade One Magistrate Mastula Mulondo. The five were sentenced to a fine of three million shillings (USD 845) each on all the three counts of assault and a community service at the Court premises for two hours daily for a period of 30 days for the offence of malicious damage to property.

Failure to pay or do the community service, each of the convicts was to serve a jail term of six and four months respectively. The trio were on 4th March 2016, assaulted and their cameras damaged while they were covering the Entebbe Local Council Elections. The HRNJ-Uganda litigation officer watched brief in this matter and worked closely with the state attorney to ensure that the journalists get justice.

On 7th June 2017, the Lira Grade Magistrate Kiwanuka Hilary dismissed a case of defacement of notices and campaign posters of President Museveni against Mungu Richard Jakisa, a Radio North journalist in Lira District in Northern Uganda. This was after the HRNJ-Uganda litigation officer Kenneth Ntende prayed for the matter to be dismissed for want of prosecution.
Mungu Jakisa Richard was on 13th February 2016, moderating a show where he had hosted four politicians who were analyzing issues arising from the presidential candidates' debate held in Kampala on the same day. One of the politicians that had been hosted returned from the commercial break and told Mungu that police officers had raided the radio station. They were arrested from the radio station and taken to Lira Central Police Station where they were detained for four nights. They were released on 17th February 2017 by the Lira Magistrates Court at a cash bail of UGX 200,000 (USD56) each.

**Fact finding mission to Ngora District**

On 8th March 2017, the HRNJ-Uganda Legal aid and support programme officer proceeded to Ngora District to establish the circumstances under which Tolbert Edait, an Etop News Paper journalist was assaulted. Tolbert informed the team that he was attending a two clan meeting on 18th January 2017. (Clan for Ajulong Rebecca and Atenia Benjamin, wife and husband respectively) in Adul village, Mukura Sub Couty in Ngora district.

Ajulong and Atenia had a family matter that was to be resolved by the couple’s clans. Edait as a reporter was on duty attending the meeting, when Atenia and his brother Okello Sam raised a complaint to the effect that Edait was not supposed to be part of the proceedings. Their plea was allegedly rejected by the members who insisted that the journalist should be part of the meeting.

It is alleged that during the course of the meeting while Edait was concentrating on the proceedings, Okello Sam pulled the chair on which Edait was seated, causing him to fall down.

Edait sustained a blunt trauma on the posterior part of the head, lower back and the lower abdomen.

He filed a case of assault occasioning actually bodily harm and the case is at the Chief Magistrates Court of Soroti at Ngora vide Criminal-case No. 15/ 2017.

**National Outreach Meeting for Editors in Gulu and Arua Districts**

On 30th March 2017, HRNJ-Uganda conducted two editors/managers meetings in Northern Uganda; Gulu(30th /03/2017), Palema Crown hotel and Arua District (23rd /03/2017), Desert Breeze hotel.

The meetings aimed at deliberating issues on how HRNJ-Uganda should work with the editors/managers in both Districts and to secure a safe working environment for the media. The meetings also focused on securing working environment for journalists and to enhance the relationship between the media editor/managers and HRNJ-Uganda. Nine members (8 male, 1 female) turned up for the meeting at Desert Breeze Hotel. And 13 at Palma Crown hotel (10m & 3F).
HRNJ-Uganda attends a sub-regional (East African) consultation on the draft guidelines on Access to Information and Elections for Africa.

HRNJ-Uganda participated in a sub-regional consultation on the draft guidelines on Access to Information and Election in Africa.

The meeting was held from 14th -15th June 2017, in Nairobi, Kenya.

The meeting was organized by the Centre for Human Rights, University of Pretoria, South Africa, and the University of Nairobi, Kenya, in collaboration with the Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression and Access to Information in Africa.

HRNJ-Uganda was represented by its National Coordinator, Mr. Robert Ssempala.

The two-day consultation meeting focused on discussions of the current draft of the guidelines on access to information and elections in Africa. The guidelines seek to outline the minimum access to information obligation of key stakeholders in the electoral process such as election management bodies, election monitors and observers, media practitioners and civil society organizations.

HRNJ attends IFEX strategy Conference and General meeting, Montreal, Quebec, Canada

HRNJ-U is a member of the International Freedom of Expression Exchange (IFEX) a global coalition on Freedom of Expression and Information based in Toronto Canada. From 12th -16th June 2017, IFEX held its bi-annual Strategy Conference and General Assembly in Montreal.

HRNJ-Uganda was represented by the Programmes Manager Moses Magoola. During the Strategy Conference Moses made a presentation seeking to explore and design an effective collaboration strategy that works across borders and organisations especially those constantly targeted by state operatives.

The presentation was specific to the situation in Uganda with a view of harnessing a cross exchange of ideas from other participants of IFEX in order to find lasting solutions to threats encountered by the IFEX members.
Institutional Development.

HRNJ-Uganda moved to New Premises

HRNJ-Uganda was able to move from its previous facility in Rubaga to new premises in Bukoto. The new location is strategically positioned and more secure as compared to the previous one.


A number of strategic interventions have been undertaken in the last six months that aimed at strengthening the organization. Among them were; revision and concretization of the security policy and plan; development of the board charter, revision of the resource mobilization strategy, drafting of the Monitoring & Evaluation, the human resource policy as well as development of the new strategic plan 2017-2021.