

fome symposium 2024 - documentation

Input: The potential negative effects of media interventions - LGBT issues in Uganda

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Media Assistance: Mind the Gap!

A critical review of common practices and strategies

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The *potential* negative effects of media interventions: LGBT issues in Uganda

By Sara Namusoga-Kaale

Background

- Media development interventions are not new
- Initially mostly north-based interventions, now Russia, China and Turkey have come on board
- Mostly good: the BBC Komla Dumor Award (investigative journalism etc, DW Akademie (media start-ups and young journalists, social media research ([Reclaiming social media](#))).

Enter controversy: LGBT rights

Namusoga (2017, PhD thesis)

- Coverage is negative/biased
- Six frames: Human rights, crime, culture, religion, legislation, medicine
- Human rights frame is dominant (104), Crime (55), Culture (53), Religion (42)
- These parameters lead to the negative coverage LGBT issues in the Ugandan media.

The negative coverage LGBT issues in the Ugandan media

- Here is how:
- The dominant frame= human rights but it is applied negatively by relying on sources that are opposed to LGBT issues in Uganda, that is the religious leaders (154). The majority of these sources are Ugandan, and Ugandans are generally opposed to homosexuality.
- LGBT people are absent in the news as sources
- LGBT issues are carried mostly in the national news pages
- Tabloids (*Rolling Stone*) published names and details of LGBT individuals in Uganda. It is widely believed that David Kato, a prominent gay rights activist and founding member of Sexual Minorities Uganda (SMUG) was murdered following this exposure.

Media development interventions

Social and cultural context is important- Uganda

- **Uganda is a very religious society** (Christianity, Islam and African Traditional Religion).
Most religions are opposed to LGBT relationships
- **Cultural institutions are still influential** (Opponents argue that LGBT people are un-African, not family friendly-unable to reproduce etc.)
- **“We don’t mind LGBT people as long as they keep private”**. Therefore, **LGBT identity** is problematic.
- **Bilateral relationships with China and Russia**. Politicians share the same “values”

Need to tread “carefully”



- Human rights frame used negatively---sources opposed to the LGBT rights
- Backlash from the public: Sovereignty of Uganda
- LGBT issues as national issues
- **Social (media) leaders.** *Pastor Martin Sempa* is a prominent anti-LGBT activist and social media influencer. *Simon Kaggwa Njala* is a TV journalist whose interview with a gay rights activist went viral- and keeps going viral- when he asked, “[Are you gay? Why are you gay?](#)” *Andrew Mwenda* is a social media influencer and pro-LGBT rights activist.

Wrap up

- Context is important: interventions should uphold the principle of not harming people (David Kato)
- The focus on homosexual identity has no cultural relevance in most countries in Sub-Saharan Africa.
- Homosexuality is constructed as a foreign practice introduced and imposed upon local indigenous insiders who are assumed to be heterosexual and pro-natalist by default. In constructing the pure Ugandan nation, a caricature of pure heterosexual citizens who enjoy heteronormativity as the reigning social order is vital.
- Lastly, we need to monitor the negative impact of media assistance on other topics. In Uganda this could include topics such as child labour.

Thank you for your attention