

**Project Overview**

Project title	Responding to security threats online
Type of grant	Rapid Response
Grant recipient	THE UNWANTED WITNESS UGANDA Postal address P. BOX. 71314 CLOCK TOWER KAMPALA Phone, fax +256 414 697 635 Website <a href="http://www.unwantedwitness.or.ug">www.unwantedwitness.or.ug</a>
Dates covered by this report	08-01-2014
Report submission date	24 - 03- 2014
Country where project was implemented	UGANDA
Project leader name	GODFREY TWESIGYE
Team members (list)	1. SARAH NALUBWAMA 2. GEOFFREY WOKULIRA SSEBAGGALA
Partner organizations	NONE
Total budget approved	1,493 USD
Project summary	<p>The project takes an online security approach in guaranteeing internet access and utilization for activists in Uganda. While the increasing internet penetration and use is viewed as a positive development, including positioning ICT as the backbone to development, there are fears of increased resort to sophisticated and legal restrictions to limit citizens' and activists access and use of the internet.</p> <p>Methods of restriction have included low band width and speed, secret surveillance, blocking of sites and the passage of cyber laws or application of existing ones, to restrict user anonymity, user privacy and</p>

general free expression online.

Several laws to regulate internet sector have been enacted that have gone unchecked. These include; interception of Communications Act, Computer Misuse Act, Electronic Signatures' Act, and Uganda Communication Authority Act among others.

This situation has created uncertainty among activists using the internet as an advocacy platform. With little or no skill many are exposed to the vagaries of the state. Hence the timely intervention for capacity building of activists in online safety and security and in utilizing online media and digital platforms to secure their freedoms of expression and thought, association and assembly while online with support from web we want.

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## Project Summary

### Brief Background

Internet usage in Africa as a whole, and in Uganda in particular is increasing. Actors are predicting an overwhelming increase in internet penetration and use within the next few decades. While this is happening, internet use is viewed as a positive development, including positioning ICT as the backbone for development. There are fears of increased resort to sophisticated and legal restrictions to limit citizens' access and use of the internet.

Methods of restriction include low bandwidth and speed, mass surveillance, blocking of sites and the passage of cyber laws or application of existing ones, to restrict user anonymity, user privacy and free expression online through creating cyber monitoring units.

Several laws to regulate the internet have been enacted and have gone unchecked. These include; interception of Communications Act, Computer Misuse Act, Electronic Signatures' Act, and Uganda Communication Authority Act among others.

One of the key components of Unwanted Witness' mission is to inspire and engage others to use media tools for change. We embrace a collaborative process that involves both teaching and learning and mentoring from the internet based applications. Whether we're building our partners' capacity to use web based media tools in their campaigns, holding training sessions with activists from the region, or participating in shared learning online, the Unwanted Witness is enabling more and more players to bring their own stories into a campaign for change that seeks to highlight citizens concerns and hence influence democratic governance.

With support from the Web We Want, Unwanted Witness Uganda undertook capacity building in online safety and security for art activists, bloggers, netizens, and HRDs in utilizing online media and digital platforms to secure their freedoms of expression and thought, association and assembly while online.

The training sought to provide actors with knowledge on the role of online web based/ online media and digital technologies as platforms of expression and providing capacity building skills in responding to emergencies online. This was to provide actors a better understanding of their safety and security. This was undertaken to enhance the promotion, protection and respect of human rights especially activists' internet freedoms and digital rights. The Unwanted Witness believes the internet should be kept unrestricted at all costs for the enjoyment of such rights ordinarily enjoyed offline, especially freedom of expression, opinion and thought.

### **Objectives**

The project's main objective was to build the capacity of activists, bloggers, Netizen HRDs and freelance writers in understanding the safety and security threats while utilizing internet based platforms to guarantee the enjoyment of freedoms of expression and privacy online, in Uganda.

### **Participants/ Target audiences**

Participants were internet users who were interviewed for the recently conducted research by the Unwanted Witness Uganda that sought to understand the type and nature of online threats experienced by activists and human rights defenders; artists, freelance writers/journalists, bloggers and Netizen among others, in order to bolster their safety and security online.

### **Duration**

The activity was implemented during the month of January 2014

### **Primary Activity**

The Unwanted Witness organized and held a capacity building workshop for the said activists. The workshop dubbed 'Responding to online emergencies' was held on 8th January 2014. It provided hands on training in safety and security measures to activists online and was popularized through various medium both online and offline.

## Expenditure Review

Item description	Cost to Web We Want, your organisation, or other?	Cost in local currency	Cost in USD
Materials; Stationery and Training Aids	web we want	335,000	134
Hotel Charges for participants meals, refreshments & venue	web we want	1,079,700	432
Transport facilitation for participants	web we want	550,000	220
Rapporteur	web we want	100,000	40
Facilitators / consultants	web we want	1,500,000	600
Coordination	web we want	65,000	26
Bank Charges	web we want	50,000	20
Balance	web we want	52,800	21
Subtotal		3,732,500	1,493
Total project cost		3,732,500	1,493

## Project outputs, communication and dissemination activities

Interventions sought to achieve the following:

1. Popularize the existing online threats and risks among internet users.
2. Regular research to bolster knowledge on access; use; safety and security of activists online
3. Create and secure conducive online platforms for activists to express themselves
4. Impart various skills and capacities to activists and strengthen these skills as a precursor for engaging in digital and online platforms that will guarantee the enjoyment of freedoms of thought and expression
5. Build the capacity activists in utilization and application of new technological advancements
6. A reduction of instances of security threats and risks against online activists
7. Increase digital literacy among activists.

A number of actions that became the outcomes of the training were reported by a number of media platforms. These not only highlighted the grave concerns among activists, but also aimed at informing the wider public of the illegal actions especially undertaken by the state.

UW in the media regarding the outcomes of the training:

1. [UW in the media](#)
2. [Unwanted Witness Responds to Security Threats Online](#)
3. [The right to privacy and internet freedoms facing threats in Uganda – Unwanted Witness Report 2014](#)
4. [New report pins gov't on illegal internet monitoring](#)
5. [Gov't on spot for spying on internet users](#)
6. [Gov't begins monitoring internet in Uganda](#)

Video footage:

1. <http://youtu.be/s39i-uoKiBo>
2. <http://youtu.be/uau1H5u1qBw>
3. <http://youtu.be/wlWu18LB58M>
4. <http://youtu.be/4wvOX3b6VHo>
5. <https://unwantedwitness.or.ug/godrey-twesiye-director-of-programs/>

## Project outcomes and impact

The project sought to provide hands on capacity building in responding to online emergencies for activists, bloggers, Netizen, HRDs; poets and freelancer writers. This enhanced activists understanding of online threats and becoming more cautious regarding their safety and security needs online. This comes at the backdrop as the government is undertaking unprecedented enactment of various legislations actors have noted with concern as draconian in nature.

The above has prompted Unwanted Witness to undertake actions aimed at bringing to the attention of the state the bad internet legislation. The government has reacted by issuing directives for the drafting of a law on privacy and data protection and the establishment of a cyber monitoring unit with in the Uganda police force<sup>1</sup>.

Interventions sought to achieve the following:

1. Impart various skills and capacities to activists and strengthen skills as a precursor for engaging in digital and online platforms that will guarantee the enjoyment of freedoms of thought and expression
2. Capacity of activists in utilization and application of new technological advancements built
3. Creating awareness of the plight of activists through testimonies aimed at facilitating the reduction of instances of security threats and risks against online activists
4. Increasing activists digital literacy
5. Creating and securing a conducive online platforms for activists to express themselves and enjoy internet freedoms.

The Unwanted Witness Uganda defends and promotes online freedoms to prevent unabated surveillance, restrictions and increase opportunities for greater access and utilization of the internet among citizens while keeping in mind their safety and security and the enjoyment of the right to privacy while online. This is the pillar on which actions and interventions including the workshop was organized. It hence contributed to one of the overall organizational strategic objectives.

Various actors were involved and took part in the online discussions during and after the training/ workshop through twitter<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://unwantedwitness.or.ug/police-establishes-cyber-crimes-unit-to-curtail-online-freedoms/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://unwantedwitness.or.ug/campaign/uw-in-the-media/>



## Overall Assessment and Next Steps

Unwanted Witness will continue with conducting such trainings regularly, as well as courses for both individual activists and organizations` staff who use internet in their day to day work to respond to digital emergencies employed by the state.

Specialized continuous research on keeping the web free and open in Uganda will be undertaken regularly and earmarking the new tactics used to censor in order to make timely responses, capacity building initiatives regularly including information dissemination and advocacy on the plight of online freedoms, and the safety and security of activists including art activists, bloggers, Netizen, and HRDs in utilizing online media and digital platforms to secure their freedoms of expression and thought, association and assembly while online. This will enhance the promotion, protection and respect of rights and freedoms online to contribute to an open, free and accessible internet for development.

To further strengthen the web we want, Unwanted Witness is developing an application that will act as an early warning mechanism for activists to make timely responses.