International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research and Growth Evaluation.

# Role of media in peace building

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## Article Info

## Abstract

This paper focuses on the importance of the role that media plays in activating the Peace building.

## Introduction
### Definitions of the concepts
**Role:** According to George, 1993 "role is sometimes broadened to include social status and to also include exhibited behaviour in addition to expected behaviour". Role is also a function or part performed especially in a particular operation or process.
When roles are designed, they should be allocated to both men and women in every program or process. The role of women specifically reduces discrimination and shapes a better future for all.
**Peace building:** According to Schirch and Sewak (2005), peace building "seeks to prevent, reduce, transform and help people recover from violence in all forms, even structural violence that has not yet led to massive civil unrest". It focuses on "transforming relationships and structures in society to decrease the likelihood of future violence" (Zelizer and Oliphant, 2013) [2]. But for many years, this peace building was seen as a process that occurred after conflict and violence ended and today it has become much broader and can therefore take place in any stage of conflict. Thus, a common definition of peace building by Galtung focuses on three approaches to peace: peacekeeping, peace-making and peace building, (Galtung, 1976) [3]. As Zelizer and Oliphant, (2013) [2] also noted, peace building includes peacekeeping, peace-making and conflict prevention.

### The role of media in conflict
The role of media in general is a widely written and talked about topic. Numerous scholars have written on the role media have played in several economies, political situations and social environments. However, despite such wide coverage, very little focus has been on the role media have played in conflicts, even less on the media's role as a peace building tool in conflict (Newbold, 1995).

### Functions of the Media in Prevention of Violence and Peace building
The role of media in our lives is diverse, as we have seen before. Without critical analysis it is really tough to differentiate between fact and fabrication or propaganda. In the peace building process, it is a matter of paramount importance to understand these roles properly. Media can play the following roles in support of prevention of conflict and peace-building.

**Media as information provider and interpreter**
(Vladimir & Schirch, 2007) [4]. The media provide people with important information about political, economic and cultural issues in their environment and environment. The media also responds to impending problems in society, such as natural disasters. Media plays two key roles as an information provider; either he is active and involved in violence, thereby pushing

Violence either takes or remains independent and out of conflict, thus fighting conflict and mitigating violence

Media plays two key roles as Information Provider; either it is active and participates in the violence thereby propelling violence, or takes or stays independent and out of conflict thereby combating conflict and alleviating violence (Puddephatt, 2006) [5].

The role that the media play in providing information in a given conflict depends on several complex factors such as the media's independence from government and political leaders, and the relationship between the media and the actors involved in the conflict. Conflict has become an "accepted norm" in the world we live in today. What this means is that conflict has become a part of our society (global, regional and local) and our daily lives. According to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), there have been more than 50 major armed conflicts around the world. SIPRI (2016) defines a major armed conflict as one that results in more than 1,000 battle-related deaths within a year. In 1993 alone, according to SIPRI, there were 34 major armed conflicts in 28 different locations in the world such as Afghanistan, Algeria, Angola, Bosnia, Colombia, Georgia, India, Peru, South Africa and Turkey to name a few (SIPRI, 2016).

The media also acts as a translator of the events that took place. In most conflict situations, the common man is not able to fully understand what is happening. Media interprets events beyond the physical world leading to understanding and clarity in a time of chaos (Vladimir & Schirch, 2007) [4].

**The media as a watchdog**
Independent, lively and widely accessible media can act as a third party "watchdog" providing feedback to the public on local issues. Vladimir Bratic and Lisa Schirch suggest, "The media can publish hidden stories to the public. Investigative reports can reveal public problems." This helps keep the government, as well as any other actor in the peace building process (including the private sector or external parties) accountable to the larger community. One aspect of this refers to financial accountability and good governance practices. In peace building operations, measures are generally implemented to increase that accountability, but it is not always easy for the general public to understand public resource issues. To address this problem, some radio stations have developed special programs on this issue. According to the Department for International Development, "pressing governments to achieve good governance is an essential long-term function of an independent media sector."

**Media as a tool for peace building**
Media events in conflict situations can be used during negotiations to help facilitate negotiations, build trust, and create an environment conducive to negotiations. Furthermore, media events can help in strengthening and mobilizing public support for peace agreements. Media events include press releases, concerts, radio shows, or any other media-related event that helps promote and celebrate peace agreements in conflict situations (Vladimir & Schirch, 2007) [4]. A good example is the Ijambo studio in Burundi. In 1995, twenty Hutu and Tutsi journalists came together and established Studio Ijambo in order to promote peace, dialogue and reconciliation. By producing 100 peace radio programs per month, Studio Ijambo has successfully promoted peace.

Another example would be Kenya. There are many cases that have been present in the Kenyan situation; First, famous Kenyan musicians from all tribes got together and released a peace song that was broadcast several times a day by major media outlets (Shitemi, *et al*., 2013) [9]. Second, there were peace convoys by the government in association with private organizations that roamed all over the country calling for peace (ibid.). Third, major mobile phone service providers have begun sending text messages containing peace messages through SMS to all mobile phone users in an effort to help avoid violence and promote peace instead (Munyua, 2011) [8].

**The Media as a gatekeeper**
The media can act as a gatekeeper by monitoring and controlling the information being broadcast. As much as the media is a provider of information, media organizations must be careful about how they present this information. Information must be unbiased while reporting true facts. Although the ideal approach is for the media to be neutral and objective, the media are heavily influenced by private owners, political affiliations, and selfish agendas

**Media as a diplomat**
Media can be used during conflict situations to send messages between the conflicting parties. In case of conflict, sensitive matters are best dealt with through confidential negotiations. However, this is not always an option in some conflicts due to various factors such as volatile political situations, violent conflict and inaccessibility of leaders to each other. In this case, the media are asked to bring in the leaders of the conflicting parties through television or radio programs in an attempt to reconcile (Bratcic & Schirch, 2007) [4].

**Media as a Connector**
According to Vladimir & Schirch (2007) [4], the media can promote positive relationships between groups of people conflicting over ethnic, national or religious identities by: a) sharing similar interests and situations eg Heroes from Rwanda, a TV show showing people who risked their lives to save lives others belonging to the rival ethnic group, b) showing the other in a similar light to oneself, eg Iraqi media broadcasting the suffering of Sunnis and Shiites helps to provoke common sympathy, c) condemning violence, eg in 1998, unionists and republicans united in Umag Northern Ireland has denounced violence and denounced it in all media, and d) showcased those with similar problems, for example aired by Israeli and Palestinian mothers as victims of conflict and suffering the loss of their children in an HBO documentary that aired in 2007.

**The Media as a promoter of peace**
Media events at the start of negotiations can be used to build trust, facilitate negotiations, or break diplomatic deadlocks to create an atmosphere conducive to negotiations. Media events such as press releases, rock concerts, or radio shows can celebrate peace agreements and negotiations. Media events may help strengthen and mobilize public support for

the conventions. Apart from these responsibilities, a proposed framework for peace building media use could employ various strategies such as (i) conflict sensitive journalism and peace journalism; (ii) peace-promoting entertainment; (3) Regulating the media to prevent incitement to violence, but also (4) civilian peace-promoting media.

## The role of media in peace building processes;
Reliable (i.e. accurate, balanced) and diversified media are essential to the peace building process, particularly its governance and democracy component. This section focuses on some of the key aspects of this role, with particular emphasis on the following points:

- The media help disseminate information and represent a variety of opinions enough for citizens to make informed choices and be able to participate in public life.
- The media serves as a watchdog over leaders and officials, as well as other actors in the peace building process.
- The presence of the media is necessary to monitor human rights and the work of other actors in civil society.
- Media coverage is essential during the election period.
- The media helps to raise awareness of the other dimensions of peace building operations, and therefore it is a vital support for many of its components in the various sectors of activities.
- The media can contribute to efforts to change attitudes among the general public. And the
- The media has been shaped by the enhanced role of new technologies in peace building processes (ICT for peace building).

## The role of the journalist in promoting peace
In essence, media owners, editors and journalists cannot escape responsibility for their actions. Journalists can be powerful both individually and collectively. Peace journalists attempt to reveal the underlying causes of the conflict and the true goals of all participants while making sure that all victims of the conflict are humanised. Journalists don't try to exploit the loss and suffering but they make sure the reporting is balanced and also show how easy it is to manipulate the news. Part of the ethical guiding principles for this type of reporting is to get people out who use peaceful measures, speak out against war and violence, and document suffering and loss on all sides. Possible solutions and trying to prevent further escalation of the conflict are at the heart of peace journalism as well.

Journalists are not shy about difficult, sensitive, or uncomfortable topics such as human rights abuses. In this context, journalists can be considered helpful to all human rights defenders because they have adhered to ethical and ethical standards in reporting as well as addressing important topics in a way that can be productive for all concerned. Help from public opinion is and should always be the goal of any report because without reaching a broad audience that can take action, the influence of the media is limited at best.

## Conclusion
The media contributes to promoting acceptance, coexistence, and convergence of points of view between the conflicting parties. It also acts as a monitor for the performance of the government in order to convey hidden facts to the public. The media is also one of the peace-building tools, as it contributes to facilitating negotiations, mobilizing support for peace agreements, and creating opportunities that promote peace, dialogue, reconciliation, and peace promotion.

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