

THE GENDER MEDIA AWARDS ARE INTENDED TO MOTIVATE MEDIA HOUSES TO EMBRACE GENDER SENSITIVITY

Vision Group scoops gender media awards

By Taddeo Bwambale

New Vision and *Bukedde*, the two leading daily newspapers, yesterday scooped media awards for publishing news stories that are gender-sensitive.

The awards recognise media houses and journalists who demonstrate gender awareness, sensitivity and inclusiveness in their reporting or productions.

Organised by the Uganda Media Women's Association (UMWA), the awards recognise the commitment of the media houses or journalists to fairness, justice and a sense of equality between men and women.

A relatively new aspect, gender-sensitive reporting involves stories that treat men and women equally and interrogate inequalities, injustices or stereotypes, while promoting positive progress.

In the newspapers category, *New Vision* ranked second-best overall, after the *Observer*.

New Vision was recognised for having the highest number of male reporters covering stories about women with a positive attitude, assigning the same number of males and females and having the most direct quotes from women on stories about women.

The newspaper emerged the best in exercising gender balance in the number of images or photos used, news subjects and sourcing for stories.

"If the media trivialises issues of women, they undermine the struggle for equal rights." Ebila

Bukedde, another daily of Vision Group, had the best score in terms of equal representation of men and women as news subjects, capturing equal number of direct quotes from men and women, having more female news subjects by male reporters and equality in the number of quotes by male reporters.

For television, Raziah Athman of *Urban TV* bagged the Best Television news story award.

Catherine Mwesigwa Kizza, the deputy editor of *New Vision*, received the awards on behalf of the two publications, during the event at Hotel Africana in Kampala.

The chief guest, ICT minister Frank Tumwebaze, advised media houses and practitioners to embrace fairness

and accuracy as tenets of good journalism.

"Correct journalism is built on the search for knowledge and telling the truth. It is about telling the story as it is, not what you want it to be," he advised.

The minister encouraged traditional media platforms to embrace digital media, rather than scorn it, in their quest to reach a wider audience and serve society.

"Digital media has raised the need for gate-keeping. Do not simply regurgitate what, we, in positions of power, tell you; speak for a person who cannot speak for themselves," he stated.

The minister promised that the Government will defend the rights of women and the press through supportive legal frameworks.

A total of 26 entries from 17 media houses were received for consideration for awards in different categories, while a team of experts monitored media coverage across selected platforms.

Margaret Sentamu-Masagazi, the executive director of the Uganda Media Women's Association, said the award was conceived to make gender-sensitive reporting a standard journalistic practice in the country.

"This will, among others, motivate aspiring and practising journalists and the media houses to advocate and embrace gender sensitivity in their career," she stated.

The Gender Media Award, she explained, will also contribute to increasing the spaces and voices of men and women equally and minimise

the negative portrayal of any gender in Uganda's media.

Dr Florence Ebila from the School of Women and Gender Studies at Makerere University encouraged journalists to pay attention to the nature of their reporting to avoid reinforcing stereotypes about women.

"If the media trivialises issues regarding women, they undermine the struggle for equal rights. There is a need to be conscious about how and what one writes, to avoid the objectification of women," she urged.

The push for gender-sensitive reporting is based on findings that the media landscape is largely male-dominated, in terms of sourcing, space, placement, position in management and focus of media houses.



Mwesigwa (right) receives *New Vision*'s prize for second best newspaper in gender-sensitive reporting from ICT minister Tumwebaze at the awards ceremony yesterday. Photo by Nancy Nanyonga