

What makes stories of persons with disabilities any different?

Uganda Media Women's Association and Mama FM recently held an Editors Dialogue meeting involving representatives of disabled people's organisations and editors from different media houses to deliberate on how best to promote disability sensitive reporting.

This is a much needed endeavour considering that stories about persons with disabilities rarely make front page news in the papers and if they do, they come from a biased background of helplessness and victimisation, which makes it hard to address their problems.

I didn't attend the meeting in person, but I followed the coverage on the Uganda Media Women's Association twitter handle, where I read a tweet quoting a journalist from the *Daily Monitor* saying "persons with disabilities stories always have the same issues. We need variety and different angles to the stories."

I was rather appalled to know that someone from the media could have the nerve to make such remarks. We read about poverty, diseases, poor infrastructure, etc, on a daily basis without anyone growing tired of the



topics - not even the media houses that continue to fill their pages with these problems nor the journalists that cover them. What makes the stories of persons with disabilities any different? Is it the subject or the thorny background of disability? Is it the notion that front page coverage of disability-related stories won't make papers fly off the shelves?

How does someone from the media expect to have a different angle to a static problem without giving it coverage so as to bring upon change? In any case, the perception that stories about persons with

disabilities are of no value because they are static and do not bring huge sales are what brought about the convening of the Editors Dialogue.

Therefore, for a journalist from a big media house to sit in a meeting and utter something so callous as that, shows that we still have a long way to go if we want coverage of stories of persons with disabilities treated with the impartiality that journalists are supposed to uphold.

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