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Uganda: Oil and gas journalists to be honoured

By Walter Wafula

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Ugandan journalists covering the oil and gas industry will be honoured for their work this year, in an effort aimed at raising the profile of good investigative journalism in the country.

The best two journalists will be awarded US$1 500 each, in addition to a plaque and certificate at the awards ceremony in December 2011, according to Grace Natabaalo, the programme associate of the African Centre for Media Excellence (ACME).

The Uganda-based non-profit organisation with the support of United States-based Revenue Watch Institute, have teamed up to organise the inaugural oil and gas reporting awards this year. The awards closely follow a series of training workshops that the two institutions have carried out jointly to promote oil and gas reporting in Uganda.

The institutions are targeting print and electronic media journalists who have covered oil and gas developments in 2011. In an email to the media in Kampala, Natabaalo, said the judges will be looking for entries that demonstrate: originality, enterprise and investigation, analysis and depth, and relevance.

The stories must also have the potential to promote accountability in public policy and decision-making in the extractive industry. Submission for entries to the programme associate is on-going and will end on 21 November 2011.

Investigative journalism

The awards come at a time when the Uganda Parliament is pushing for the resignation of two prominent cabinet ministers, including Prime Minister Amama Mbabazi and Minister for Internal Affairs Hilary Onek.

The pressure comes on the back of revelations by whistleblower website WikiLeaks and parliamentarian Gerard Karuhanga that the two ministers accepted bribes from United Kingdom-based firm Tullow Oil to facilitate multi-million dollar transactions in the country.

Unproven documents tabled before Parliament last month show that up to US$31 million was allegedly paid in bribes to the ministers in varying proportions. However, the ministers and the company have since issued strong statements denying any involvement relating to the bribery scandal that continues to hit headlines in the local press.

The duo, are jointly accused with Foreign Affairs Minister Sam Kutesa who has already stepped down to allow the parliament to investigate the matter. Mbabazi and Onek are however not convinced that stepping aside is the right thing to

do because the accusations do not hold water.

Oil exploration companies in Uganda have discovered over 2.5 billion barrels of oil which is enough to put Uganda among the top 50 global oil producing countries, according to Tullow.

How to enter

Electronic media entrants must submit their stories in a format easiest to listen to and view. Both electronic and print media reporters may submit hard copies, soft copies, or online links of their stories. All entries should be addressed to the Programme Associate, African Centre for Media Excellence, P.O. Box 11283, Kampala; or dropped off physically at the ACME offices at Plot 124, Nanjala Road (off Ggaba Road at Soya-Bunga), Kampala. Soft copies and/or online links should be emailed to info@acme-ug.org and copied to Programme Associate Grace Natabaalo at gnatabaalo@acme-ug.org.

ABOUT WALTER WAFULA

Walter Wafula is a seasoned journalist who has reported for the *Daily Monitor* newspaper in Kampala-Uganda. He is also a contributor on Bizcommunity.com website. Email Walter at wafwalt@yahoo.com and connect on LinkedIn.

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