

# The David Astor Journalism Awards Trust

## NEWS RELEASE

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### Three East African Journalists Win David Astor Journalism Awards

Three exceptionally promising young journalists from Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda have been selected as winners of the 2009 David Astor Journalism Awards, which recognise emerging talent and potential to excel in the profession.

The award winners are: Jillo Kadida, 27, at *The Daily Nation* in Kenya; Erick Kabendera, 29, at *The Guardian* in Tanzania; and Barbara Among, 27, at *The New Vision* in Uganda.

They were selected from a field of 30 locally nominated candidates through a rigorous assessment process spanning nine months. Three independent judges from the United States, South Africa and the UK chose the winners after interviewing three finalists each in Nairobi, Kampala and Dar es Salaam last week.

The purpose of the awards is to develop the capacity of outstanding early-career African print journalists through a programme of long-term support that will help them to assume future leading roles in the profession.

“These are three very different winners: all are talented, all have a track record of perseverance, and all, we are confident, will rise to the top of their profession,” the judges said in a joint statement. “But more than this, they share commitment to and support the principles of the profession.”

“We believe they will play leading roles in a regional community of like-minded colleagues united by the pursuit of independent and objective journalism,” the judges said.

The judges were: William Carmichael, former head of the Africa Program at the Ford Foundation in New York and long-time adviser to Human Rights Watch; Paula Fray, Africa Regional Director of the global development news agency Inter Press Service and former Editor of *The Saturday Star* in Johannesburg; and Michael Holman, Africa Editor at *The Financial Times* in London from 1984 to 2002, now a novelist and contributor to various publications on African affairs.

Each award winner will initially take part in a three-month professional development programme tailored to their particular needs and interests, working with experienced outside journalists, and then become career-long members of the David Astor Journalism Awards peer-support network, with links to media professionals and other organisations regionally and abroad. In addition, they each received a nominal cash award of \$500.

Appropriate programmes will be designed with the award winners and their employers in the coming months, involving attachments to newspapers in the UK or South Africa, or intensive professional mentoring by veteran outside journalists in the award winners' own newsrooms.

The candidate-selection process began in May 2008. All news media houses in the three countries were invited to nominate one candidate each for consideration. Other nominators included local journalists' associations, other media-related groups, journalism lecturers and trainers, civil society organisations, and former editors.

There were no age, educational or minimum work experience requirements but candidates were expected to be at an early stage in their career and had to meet certain key criteria, including solid commitment to the profession, continuing to work in Africa as their long-term career goal, and maintaining the highest ethical standards.

In addition, candidates had to show some special talent and flair for journalism, and the requisite qualities to succeed in the profession, such as independent thinking, courage, determination and drive.

Written applications from all of the nominees were reviewed, along with examples of their published work. Then, eight short-listed candidates in Kenya, six in Tanzania, and 10 in Uganda were interviewed last September. Meetings were held with the nominators, employers and others in November and December to seek their opinions of the candidates, after which three finalists in each country were selected.

The two runners up in Kenya were Elizabeth Mwai and Alex Ndegwa, both at *The Standard*; in Tanzania, Samuel Kamndaya at *The Citizen* and Alvar Mwakyusa at *ThisDay*; and in Uganda, Shifa Mwesigye at *The Weekly Observer* and Lydia Namubiru at *The New Vision*. They each received a nominal cash award of \$250.

The David Astor Journalism Awards Trust (DAJAT), a London-based human rights charity, sponsors the awards annually. The aim is to build effective journalistic capacity in Africa to defend human rights, promote good governance and further socio-political development.

Established in 2005, the Trust is named in honour of the late, distinguished editor of *The Observer* newspaper in London for 27 years, from 1948 to 1975, who was a lifelong

champion of African development and human rights. He died in 2001. The Trust's founding Patrons are Lord Joffe and Lord Stevenson of Coddenham.

The first award winners, selected last year, were: Murithi Mutiga at the *Daily Metro* in Kenya; Valentine Marc Nkwame at *The Arusha Times* in Tanzania; and Tabu Butagira at *The Daily Monitor* in Uganda.

They will join this year's winners for a weekend meeting in Kampala, which DAJAT will convene in early April as part of its efforts to build a regional peer-support network of future leading journalists.

The Trust plans to expand the programme to other African countries in the future.

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