

## African Media and ICT4D: The AISI Media Awards

### About ECA

The Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) is the regional arm of the United Nations, mandated to support the economic and social development of its 53 member States, foster regional integration, and promote international cooperation for Africa's development. The Commission is a pioneer in ICT for development and is the implementing agency for the African Information Society Initiative (AISI), an action framework for bridging the African digital divide.

### About AISI

AISI has been the basis for information and communication activities in Africa since 1996. AISI is not about technology. It is about giving Africans the means to improve the quality of their lives and fight against poverty. AISI's major activities and objectives include the development of national ICT policies and strategies, and building Africa's information and communication infrastructure and capacity for stakeholders. The main components of AISI are:

- Policy formulation and implementation;
- Information and knowledge development and management;
- Partnership and networking;
- Outreach and communication; and
- Africa's role in the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS).

### Media in the AISI Framework

Article 54 of AISI on the role of the media states that: "In addition to being an essential means for information dissemination, the mass media plays a critical role in spreading awareness in Africa of the importance and benefits of the information revolution. Newspapers, radio and television provide an easy, accessible and cheap means of carrying information to the end user. Communities in Africa do not have to wait for the Internet to receive much of the information it carries. Mass media can access many of the existing sources of information and provide broad channels of communications to the poor and to remote areas."

### Role of African Media in ICT4D

In order to build a sustainable and inclusive information society in the continent, ICT innovations and research are of particular importance as they could have revolutionary impact on currently underserved and marginalized groups, especially women and rural inhabitants. The role of African media is to report on these innovations and research, disseminate the results, create awareness and stimulate debate on their impact on development and society.

Although media in Africa are beginning to report on ICT innovations and research, there is still a wide gap in their knowledge and comprehension of ICT issues in relation to development trends within their national context.

### ECA in Support of African Media

Recognizing the critical roles African media should play, ECA has embarked on a number of activities to raise awareness and build the capacity of journalists and media institutions to analyze the issues within the framework of AISI.

#### • Media Forum

In order to raise awareness among African journalists about the importance of the African Information Society, ECA with support from Swiss Agency for Development Cooperation (SDC), held the first and second media forums in May 2002 in Bamako and in May 2003 in Addis Ababa. The events provided unique opportunities to discuss challenges as well as opportunities faced by prominent journalists and media institutions and their contributions to the establishment of the information society in the continent.

#### • Capacity building

An e-mail discussion list for media practitioners was created for participants of the second media forum in response to the need for creating a network among journalists and media institutions and to provide them with an online space to exchange best practices, lessons learned and experiences in reporting on ICT for development issues. One of the key discussion topics actively pursued on the list was how African Media can contribute to the advancement of the information society and specifically, what contributions the media can make in the WSIS process.

# QUOTES FROM WINNERS



**Adetokunbo Abiola**  
Nigeria

"Its thrilling to have been part of the AISI/OSIWA competition. Its incredible! I've suddenly become very popular from nowhere. My people want to get me to meet the Governor of the state in which I work. Three weeks ago I would never have thought that possible. More than all this, the competition is a testament on the need to make millions of Nigerians become connected to to the internet and all other aspects of the ICT. Without this connection, no development can really take place."



**Bavesh Baijnath**  
Mauritius

"It was really an honour to receive such a prestigious award. First of all I would like to thank my parents and specially my friends Sayeless who helped me a lot starting the Mauritius-Portal.com project in December 2003. Also I would like to thank ECA staff for their timely support and enthusiasm for their support into giving me the opportunity to attend such a high level Conference like the Highway Africa 2004 and the AISI-IICD Local Media Content Award."

"This award will surely have an effect on my life in many ways. This award surely put Mauritius as a leader in the Web Development field and online Media, and reassures Mauritius as a Cyber Island. Now, I think that this will attract more people to visit my website which is world wide known, thanks to the award."

"This award also means more hard work so as to strive to keep up with the new media challenges and work even harder and in a more focused way to give the African continent a valuable ICT Media Website. I hope that winning this award will encourage more coverage on ICT in my country and the whole African continent. MauritiusPortal.com is committed to the sharing of knowledge and helping people into starting their own website and their online presence."



**Eteka Coutchika Cyrille**  
Benin

Les efforts déployés (contre vents et marrées) par l'UNECA afin que toutes les africaines et tous les africains aient équitablement accès à la société du savoir, gage de tout développement durable, sont très salutaires. De plus, l'UNECA a mis les bouchées doubles pour sortir de l'anonymat tous ceux qui de près ou de loin s'échinent (chaque jour que Dieu fait) à promouvoir les Technologies de l'Information et de la Communication (TIC) sur le continent noir. Tel a été mon cas en République du Bénin où malgré toutes mes publications sur les TIC dans la presse locale et sur Internet, mon pays est resté insensible voire inerte. Il a fallu que l'UNECA organise l'appel à candidature pour les Prix AISI Media 2004 pour que je sorte des ténèbres que l'on a volontairement ou involontairement voulu me maintenir à vie. Je suis très très honoré de ce Prix AISI/GTZ 2004 qui m'a été attribué. Je tiens aussi à remercier du plus profond de mon cœur l'UNECA et les Autorités sud-africaines qui n'ont ménagé aucun effort pour la réussite de cette grandiose cérémonie de remise de prix aux différents lauréats. Cela restera gravé à jamais en or dans les archives de l'histoire africaine. L'UNECA, c'est du bien, c'est du bon et c'est du beau !



**Adri Joseph Gnassengbe**  
Togo

"Je pense comme je vous le disais qu'il faut évoluer vers des trophées comme il ya en eu avec les sud africains deuxième chose je pense que le grand forum de Grahamstown avait 95% même plus d'anglophones il faut qu'il y ai aussi beaucoup plus de francophones pour découvrir plus l'initiative qui en soi est africaine et a le mérite d'être un domaine porteur."

Pour Ma part j'ai beaucoup apprécié d y participer mais je suis arrivé sans trop savoir ce que c'était . C'était la même chose que mes collegues AWardies 2004. Ce serait bien pour les éditions prochaines et si c'est à l'occasion d'un grand forum comme celle ci qu'il y ai un petit mémo.



**Baba Thiam**  
Senegal

"L'initiative de la Commission Economique pour l'Afrique du système onusien est à saluer. En voulant promouvoir une meilleure compréhension des enjeux des NTIC à travers la production d'articles de presse écrite, d'éléments audiovisuels et radiophoniques, la CEA est en entrain de jouer sa partition dans ce qu'il est convenu d'appeler la société de l'information. Les défis qui interpellent l'Afrique et ses fils sont importants. Après avoir raté la révolution mécanique et la révolution industrielle, le continent noir a l'impérieuse mission de réussir la révolution technologique. Et cela passe nécessairement par une sensibilisation et une information des populations. Les acteurs économiques, politiques, sociaux et culturels, les femmes et les jeunes doivent être en mesure de maîtriser tous les paramètres qui constituent l'architecture des nouvelles technologies de l'information et de la communication."

## Best Female Reporter on ICT Issues



### Winner

**Rosemary Okello**  
Kenya



### Finalist

**Ellen Muleya Chikale**  
Zambia

### • **WSIS participation**

ECA supported the participation of African journalists and media practitioners at WSIS December 2003, to raise their awareness on the process as well as on global ICT developments. The articles submitted by the media during the Summit are posted on the AISI site ([www.uneca.org/aisi](http://www.uneca.org/aisi))

### • **Training of Journalists**

A Training-of-Trainers Manual on ICT policy issues was created and funded by the Communication Assistance Foundation (CAF) in July 2003. The Manual is a timely intervention, which introduces African journalists and media practitioners to key and emerging issues on Africa's Information Society in a systematic manner.

### • **Media Awards**

During the third meeting of the Committee on the Development Information (CODI III) which was attended by 500 national delegates in May 2003, ECA presented the AISI Media Awards to 12 journalists and media institutions which had made significant contributions to the advancement of Africa's Information Society through reporting on ICT for Development issues. Feedback from the forum participants and award winners concluded that journalists still face a number of formidable challenges in reporting on ICT for development, one of which is the limited opportunity to build their technical capacity on the use of ICT and to familiarize themselves with information society issues.

### **AISI Media Award**

As part of ECA's AISI Outreach and Communication Programme, the AISI Media Awards were introduced to encourage more informed coverage of the information society and ICT for development issues in Africa. The AISI Media Awards are aimed at individual journalists and media institutions based in Africa that are "promoting journalism which contributes to a better understanding of the information society in Africa".

### **Why the AISI Media Award?**

- To create greater ICT4-D awareness within the framework of AISI;
- To support African media in specializing and mastering ICTs and development issues thereby sharpening their skills and knowledge base;
- To enhance access to information on ICT4D issues by various African stakeholders, thereby raising greater awareness; and
- To stimulate national debate on key issues and emerging trends.

### **Rules and Regulations**

- ECA has the right to reproduce and transmit in any media, for non-commercial purposes, the work that has been selected;
- ECA has the right to cancel the Awards at any time, when the selected entities and individuals are found ineligible or do not fulfill the criteria laid down for the Awards;
- Prizewinners will be ineligible to enter the awards for a period of two years;
- The decision of the judges shall be final; and
- Members of the panel of judges for the Awards and members of the sponsoring institutions shall not be eligible to submit an entry.

### **AISI Media Awards 2003**

Over 80 submissions were made to various categories of the Awards. Seventeen African countries were represented.

### **Impact**

The Awards succeeded in raising awareness on the importance of information society issues among journalists. One of the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) Award winners said that the award changed the attitude of editors towards ICT stories, which resulted in more ICT stories being published by his newspapers.

All the award winners expressed increased confidence in reporting on ICT matters and recognised their role as catalysts in encouraging other journalists to venture into the field. Mr. Takawira Musara, for instance, was invited to several workshops and conferences to prepare other journalists for WSIS.

Their professional opportunities and networks have been significantly expanded due to the Awards. These opportunities led to widened perspectives and experience among the Award winners as well as other journalists who were made aware of the programme and the importance of reporting on ICT research and development.

### **Lessons learned**

Much more needs to be done. ECA considers the findings of the report, "African Media and ICT4D: Documentary evidence", very alarming, taking into account the level of challenges the continent is facing in general. Unless the media becomes fully aware of the importance of the information society and plays a leading role

in stimulating public discourse, the majority of the people will remain uninformed and will not benefit from the ICT revolution.

IDRC and ECA have scaled up efforts in raising awareness among journalists, editors and media organizations on the role they can play in promoting the information society in Africa by organizing the AISI Media Awards 2004. As research and innovation continues to be indispensable in democratizing access to information, it is proposed that the category for reporting on ICT research and innovation will remain a key Award, together with a new category on reporting on ICT policy. This new category will encourage media to report on ongoing ICT policy formulation and implementation in various countries, with a view to consequently increasing participation and involvement of the public in such processes.

### **AISI Media Awards - 2004**

Over 90 applications have been submitted from 17 countries (Benin, Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Mali, Mauritius, Nigeria, Senegal, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania, Togo, Tunisia, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe) to the following categories of the Awards.

- Radio: Programmes from community, commercial and national public radio stations, including news, discussions, documentaries and features;
- Print: Regional, national and local newspapers, including specialist magazines;
- Television: Factual (documentary and features), News; and
- Other: Broadcaster of the Year, Promoting African Languages in the Information Society, Media Personality Award (sustained analysis in the news media), Media and ICT application, and the African Diaspora Media.

The winners of the 2004 Awards were announced in September 2004 at the Highway Africa Conference

held in Grahamstown, South Africa. Details of the 2003 and 2004 AISI Media Awards can be found at: <http://www.uneca.org/aisi/mediaaward.htm>

### **AISI Media Awards - 2005**

In addition to the previous year's categories, the 2005 Media Awards introduced a special AISI/GKP/SDC Media Award on WSIS. The Award aims to encourage African journalists and bring to international recognition thoughtful and incisive reporting on African and the WSIS process. The Awards will be made for published journalism by African journalists (print, radio, tv or web) that go beyond describing projects or new initiatives. The winning entries will be disseminated internationally and honoured at the second phase of the WSIS scheduled to take place in Tunis from 16 to 18 November, 2005.

### **Partners Promoting African Media in ICT4D**

The AISI Media Awards project is currently supported by the International Development Research Centre (IDRC), the International Institute for Communication and Development (IICD), Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ), the Open Society Initiative for Western Africa (OSIWA), the Global Knowledge Partnership (GKP) and the Swiss Development Cooperation (SDC).

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*2004 winners pause for a group photograph.*



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## The AISI Media Awards

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Open Society Initiative for West Africa

