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DEPARTMENT OF JOURNALISM & COMMUNICATION

PRESS RELEASE

New Study on Science Journalism in Africa to Help Fill Gaps in Reporting

KAMPALA – 14 FEBRUARY 2011: A study sponsored by UNESCO to establish the status, volume and quality of media reporting on science and technology in Africa is underway in nine countries. The countries, selected to represent all regions of the continent and its linguistic diversity, include Cameroon, Ghana, Kenya, Morocco, Mozambique, Namibia, Senegal, South Africa, and Uganda.

The study is spearheaded by the Department of Journalism and Communication at Makerere University, which is one of 12 UNESCO-designated potential centres of excellence in journalism training in Africa.

UNESCO is supporting the study under its initiative for partnering with African media organizations to disseminate scientific knowledge. The research is also a follow up to UNESCO's special agreement with the African Union on developing advocacy and capacity building programmes for African journalism on science and technology.

Dr. George Lugalambi, a former newspaper editor, currently senior lecturer and head of the Department of Journalism and Communication at Makerere, is leading the study in collaboration with a network of media researchers in the countries that make up the sample.

The research involves analyzing the science and technology content of major newspapers in the selected countries. Newspaper readers will be interviewed as well to help shed light on how audiences receive and make sense of news and information about science and technology. In addition, the views of key figures in the media and in the science and technology research and policy communities will be gathered.

Dr. Fackson Banda, the programme specialist responsible for science communication initiatives at UNESCO, hopes that the results of the study will inform the recommendations on coverage of science and technology for the benefit of the news media, UNESCO, journalism educators, and other media development actors.

"Here is an opportunity to understand the gaps in science and technology reporting and fill them," says Dr. Banda. "Science journalism can be democratic, educational and developmental for many of the countries in Africa. We need to elevate it to a level where policy-makers can consider it part of their overall governance, educational and development agendas."

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