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Vision Group toasts to women achievers, Flair

Publication date: Tuesday, 24th March, 2009



Stanbics' Paul Omara (left) and Jackie Namara hand jajja Nakijoba her prize

By Irene Nabusoba

They say there is always six seconds of fame for everyone in their lifetime. This was definitely it for Grace Arach, Jajja Bena Nakijoba and Winnie Asege, the winners of the fifth edition of The New Vision Women Achievers Award last week, at the Golf Course Hotel, Kampala. The three walked away with cash prizes of sh5m, 2m and 1m respectively and certificates of recognition.

The New Vision Women Achievers' Award was born in 2005 in commemoration of Women's Day, to reward ordinary women, who have done so much with so little.

Cathy Mwesigwa, the Features editor, said women have, for a while, been celebrated but "there is that woman who was always missing." She said The New Vision was partnering with Stanbic Bank to recognise such unsung heroes.

Stanbic Bank's marketing manager, Paul Omara, said the bank was honoured to be associated with the awards: "As long as The New Vision continues to recognise ordinary women, we are with you," he pledged.

Vision Group CEO Robert Kabushenga put the event in perspective and kept the audience laughing with his rather sad childhood story turned light with comical remarks.

"Back in the days of my grandfather, chicken was a preserve for men. Today I struggle for even the gizzard. I will find my daughters have ravaged it if I delay," he joked.

He pledged to support the overall winner, Arach by paying her first semester fees if she enrolls for a degree. "I want you continue helping people," he said.

The 23-year-old Arach, a former LRA rebel abductee spent seven years in captivity, was repeatedly raped, twice married off to two LRA commanders and forced to kill. She fled in 2001 and is now helping to rehabilitate returnees.

Asked how she was coping, when many would rather throw in the towel, she said: "I do it because I feel bad for my people. Because I know we share the same experience. And because I know they will understand me and learn, knowing I have gone through it too."

Arach wants to study up to PhD level. "I want to set up an NGO to help mend the many wrongs that these men have done," she said. "I do

not want to ever get married. The way I was treated in the bush has made me dread men. I wonder whether there will ever be any kind of counselling that will help change my perception of men.”

Jajja Nakijjoba, the first runner-up, said she would use her prize to pay fees for some of her grown dependants. “I am so happy because my children are now going to study. God has answered my prayers,” said the 69-year-old born-again from Katanga slums.

This year’s award-giving ceremony coincided with the first anniversary of Flair, a Vision Group women’s magazine, modelled to suit today’s woman.

“Last year, we launched Flair and today, we are gathered to celebrate the baby,” Barbara Kaija, The New Vision deputy editor-in-chief said. “The quality and consistency in editorial content of each issue says what New Vision has to offer. We always provide role models to emulate. Please recommend it for your daughters. It is safe,” she said.

The dinner was attended by women from of all walks of life and featured performances from artistes like Tshilla.

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