

Kenyan and Zambian journalists win Michael Elliott Award

Stephanie Wangari of Kenya and Annie Zulu of Zambia have been named the 2026 recipients of the Michael Elliott Award for Excellence in African Storytelling, recognised for reporting that reflects both the opportunities and the challenges shaping communities across the continent today.



The two journalists will be given training at *The Economist* in London. Source: ICFJ.

Important stories

In her article for *Rest of World*, “*Malawi’s new farmhand: AI that speaks the local language*,” Wangari reported on how farmers in Malawi are using an AI app in their own language to achieve better farming outcomes.

Zulu’s piece in *Viewfinder*, “*Sold for labour: The untold story of Zambian housekeepers trapped in Pakistan*,” uncovered a cross-border human trafficking operation, revealing how Zambian women moving to Pakistan in search of a better life are often being trafficked or placed into servitude.

The Michael Elliott Award aims to advance the careers of emerging journalists in Africa who work to strengthen people’s voices and improve their well-being. The award is given out by the International Centre for Journalists (ICFJ), in partnership with the ONE Campaign and the Elliott family. In addition to a cash prize, Wangari and Zulu will participate in a specialised professional development programme at the London headquarters of *The Economist*, a long-time partner of the award.

The Elliott Award was established in honour of former ICFJ board director Michael Elliott, who served as a top editor at *The Economist*, *Newsweek* and *Time* before becoming CEO of ONE.

Anniversary

“This year marks the tenth anniversary of the Michael Elliott Award, and I am delighted to congratulate our newest winners. Stephanie Wangari and Annie Zulu’s brave and original work exemplifies the spirit and the range of the award,” said Emma Oxford, Michael Elliott’s widow. “I am tremendously grateful to our partner

and donors for the continuing success of the program. And warm thanks to my fellow judges, especially Lionel Barber for his astute chairing of the selection committee.”

Wangari is a freelance technology journalist based in Nairobi, Kenya. “What struck me most was that farmers who once waited months for extension services [farming advice] could now access timely guidance when their crops needed it most,” she said.



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“In a context where delays could mean the difference between a good harvest and loss, especially amid increasingly unpredictable weather driven by climate change, this shift felt urgent,” she added. “For the first time, innovation spoke to these farmers in their own language, in their own context, bridging a gap that had long left many behind.”

“I would like to extend my sincere thanks to my editors at *Rest of World*: Gayathri Vaidyanathan, Eric Bellman, Rina Chandran and Christine Glancey as well as visuals editor Munira Mutaheer, photographer The Chikondi, and translator Yamikani Makanga for their support and collaboration in bringing this story to life,” Wangari said.

Original reporting

Zulu is a freelance investigative journalist based in Lusaka, Zambia, who covers a range of topics including gender, human rights and climate change. “This story exposes a disturbing and underreported trafficking route, where vulnerable Zambian women are lured with promises of work in Pakistan, only to face exploitation, abuse, and, in some cases, forced survival in extreme conditions,” she said. “It matters because it reveals how systemic gaps, both at home and abroad, leave these women unprotected while traffickers continue to operate with little accountability.”

“I’m deeply grateful to the survivors who bravely shared their experiences, often at great personal risk, as well as to my editor, Daneel Knoetze, who supported me throughout the reporting process on this project,” she said.

“I salute two outstanding winners among a strong group of entries across Africa in this year’s Michael Elliot award,” said Selection Committee Chair Lionel Barber “The judges were impressed by the winners’ deep and original reporting and the overall impact of their journalism.”

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