

Association formed for Ugandan energy journalists

 By [Walter Wafula](#)

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The Uganda Energy Journalists Association (UEJA), a new association supporting and uniting reporters on the energy and extractives industries in Uganda, has been formed. The UEJA aims to strengthen the capacity of journalists on objective reporting and understanding the nature of the energy and natural resources sector in Uganda, according to Ibrahim Kasita, the founder and president of the association.



"We need to increase the number of journalists reporting on energy issues. Right now there are a few of us," he said in an interview on Thursday, 23 June 2011. "We intend to begin by training about 50 journalists to strengthen their capacity and reporting of extractives and energy industries by 50% this year."

Increase coverage by 75%

"We shall also be able to increase coverage of energy issues up-country by about 75%. We want to see that these issues are reported countrywide. Energy is a national issue, not a Kampala matter," he added. UEJA plans to start training local journalists within the next two months, starting with a two-day training session for up-country and national journalists.

The association also aims at establishing reporting standards to ensure that media reports are factual, well-researched and positively contribute to the development of petroleum and energy resources in Uganda, according Kasita.

The young oil and gas industry in Uganda is currently the most reported resource area, following the discovery of an estimated 2.5 billion barrels of recoverable oil by firms including; Tullow Oil, Heritage Oil and Gas and Dominion Petroleum. The oil is estimated to be enough to place Uganda among the world's top 50 oil producers, according to Tullow. The exports would earn the country at least US\$2 billion for 25 years.

Educating the public

Kasita is optimistic that through the association, energy journalists in the country will aggressively educate the public about petroleum development and thereby influence public opinion, policies and decision-making processes.

The creation of the UEJA comes a month after Uganda's ex-minister of energy Hilary Onek decried the quality of journalists covering the oil and gas industry in the country. Onek was irked by the level of misinformation that was propagated by unethical reporters. He urged the journalists to be ethical while practicing their trade, to prevent conflicts related to the oil and gas industry.

"You need to be responsible in your reporting, otherwise you can create turmoil in the country," Onek said in May at the launch of an information advocacy project aimed at enhancing information flow about the oil and gas industry in Uganda. "When you give out wrong information, it can destabilise the country."

ABOUT WALTER WAFULA

Walter Wafula is a seasoned journalist who has reported for the *Daily Monitor* newspaper in Kampala-Uganda. He is also a contributor on Bizcommunity.com website. Email Walter at wafwalt@yahoo.com and connect on LinkedIn.

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