

New African Woman Awards selects 2016's most influential women

The New African Woman Awards, announced in London late last week, have selected winners from Africa's most influential women. The Awards recognise African women who have been instrumental in shaping their societies and pay tribute to individuals who have made significant contributions in various fields within and outside the continent.



The Awards were held under patronage of the African Development Bank.

Winners

- Dr Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, chairperson of the AU Commission was honoured with the 2016 New African Woman in Politics & Public Office award. As the first woman ever to lead the continental organisation, Dr Dlamini-Zuma has put women issues at the forefront of all high-level policy discussions and central to all initiatives that have been led by the AU Commission. The AU declared in 2015 "The year of Women's Empowerment" a passion for this activist and politician, who introduced universal access to free basic healthcare during her tenure in the cabinet of Nelson Mandela. As South Africa's Minister of Foreign Affairs, her focus centred on the promotion of human rights stability and peace collective development in Burundi and the DRC.
- The 2016 New African Woman of the Year award went to Geraldine Fraser-Moleketi, the special envoy on gender at the African Development Bank who has contributed extensively to gender equality and woman empowerment in banks and several other institutions. She has demonstrated exemplary work in her field, having served as the former director of the United Nations Development Programme UNDP and as a board member of the United Nations Institute for Training and Research, appointed by the Secretary General of the UN.
- Education activist Zuriel Oduwole won the 2016 New African Woman on the Rise Award. She is best known for her work on advocacy for the education of girls in Africa. Her initiative has led her to be the youngest person to be profiled by Forbes Magazine. In 2014, at age 12, Oduwole was the world's youngest filmmaker, self-producing work screened commercially, after her film showed in two movie chains.

- Obiageli Ezekwesili, the face of the #Bringbackourgirls campaign has been rewarded with the 2016 New African Woman Award in Civil Society. Oby's tenacity and zeal over the abduction of the Chibok girls has been exemplary. Despite the girls still being missing she remains resolutely steadfast in the belief they will one day come home, and making sure they are not forgotten. Ultimately her fight is not only for the abducted girls but for the disenfranchised and for those groups who have often, through their circumstances, lacked a voice. Oby, a former World Bank Vice President and co-founder of Transparency International, plays other roles in social activism and has been a vocal denouncer of social ills and human injustice. She is also the economic advisor for the Open Society, where she advises nine reform-committed African heads of state including Paul Kagame of Rwanda and Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf of Liberia.
- The 2016 New African Woman in Education award goes to Wanjiru Kamau-Rutenberg, director of the African Women in Agricultural Research and Development programme, designed to equip top women agricultural scientist across sub-Saharan Africa to accelerate agricultural gains by strengthening their research and leadership skills. Wanjiru is the Founder and past Executive Director of Akili Dada, an award-winning leadership incubator with a mission to contribute to nurturing transformative leadership in girls and young women.
- Olajumoke Adenowo received the award for 2016 New African Woman in Business. She is referred as the face of architecture in the Nigeria and is called 'Starchitech' by CNN. She directly pushes for gender equality via her own radio talk 'Voice of Change'. Ms Adenowo was also nominated at the All Africa Business Leaders Awards in the West Africa Business Women of the Year category.
- Ghana's youngest female entrepreneur, Winnifred Selby was honoured with 2016 New African Woman in Science, Technology & Innovation award. At only 20 years old, she is the co-founder of the Ghana Bamboo Bikes Initiative (producing 60 to 100 bicycles a month). She is an outstanding leader and social entrepreneur who has been dedicating her life to the economic empowerment of young people, notably women. She primarily employs women who train each other. She is the winner of Cartier Women's Initiative Award and was a participant of the 2013 UNFCCC.
- Arunma Oteh received the award for the 2016 New African Woman in Finance and Banking. The former director general of the Securities Exchanges Commission of Nigeria was recently named VP and treasurer at the World Bank. As director general of the Securities and Exchange Commission of Nigeria, she led the transformation of the country's capital markets industry into a major global presence. At the World Bank, she leads a large and diverse team responsible for managing more than \$150 billion in assets.
- The New African Woman Award for Media was given to Mo Abudu, the first African woman to launch a Pan-Africa TV channel. She launched her media career with the creation of her own talk show 'Moments with Mo' the first of its kinds in Africa. Soon after she developed one of her grandest business endeavours yet, EbonyLifeTV. She has been honoured as 'Entrepreneur of the Year by Women Week in New York and listed as 'One of the 25 Most Powerful in Global TV by the Hollywood Reporter.
- Ethiopian long-distance runner Almaz Ayana has received the 2016 New African Woman in Sport Award. Almaz won the 5000m course with a world-leading personal best of 14:14:32 during the 2015 Championship in Beijing, among others. She also won the African Championships in Marrakech and the 2014 IAAF Diamond League meeting in Shanghai, which made her the third fastest female athlete over that distance.

- The award for the 2016 New African Woman in Arts and Culture went to BAFTA award-winning director, Amma Asante. The Ghanaian is the woman behind the British production, "Belle" which sparked off a debate about Britain's slave history. Her next film will again dissect the complexity of race relations, where she depicts the controversial marriage between Botswana's first president Seretse Khama and British clerk, Ruth Williams.

Speaking at the awards ceremony, IC Publications Group Publisher and CEO, Omar Ben Yedder said, "We are recognising some phenomenal African talent, irrespective of gender. Nevertheless, we need to continue our struggle to give women equal opportunities on our continent. Women are often the first victims of injustice and, at the same time, the single most important factor if we are to see through the required transformative change in the continent. The women we are recognising today, through their work and actions, are helping to change the plight of women and of Africans in general. More importantly these individuals are helping make the continent we love one we can be proud of."

This year's selection panel included reGina Jane Jere, New African Woman editor in chief; Leila Ben Hassen, GM at IC Publications; Dr Nkosana Moyo executive chairman of Mandela Institute for Development Studies; Onike Nicol-Houra, principle business development officer at the African Development Bank; and Amadou Mahtar Ba, co-founder and executive chairman AllAfrica Global Media and Member of UN Secretary-General's High Level Panel on Women's Economic Empowerment.

Social media campaign

The New African Woman Social Media Campaign was also launched at the Awards ceremony. The campaign, which will run until the end of 2016, asks the magazine's readers, as well as prominent African women, how they define the New African Woman.

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