

Rap, rap, rapping the news

BY Amy Fallon

IN A COUNTRY where journalists who report the news can get into trouble from the government, hip-hop artists turned journalists – “raporters” and “newsicians” as they’re called – are rapping the news and pushing the boundaries.



In Uganda, as in many other countries around the world, topics such as politics, corruption and land rights are considered off-limits by the government.

There have been 26 arrests, physical attacks and threats to journalists in Uganda this year, says the African Freedom of Expression Exchange, which is a network of press freedom organisations.

And another African country, Eritrea, was ranked as the most censored in the world last year, says the Committee to Protect Journalists. Ethiopia came fourth.

But a popular TV show in Uganda, *NewzBeat*, covers everything from Uganda’s harsh laws to the political situation in Ukraine to West Africa’s Ebola epidemic.

It’s a brave thing to do because before the east African country’s elections in March the government detained journalists, blocked social media and banned stories about protests.

NEWS WITH ‘RHYME AND REASON’

One of the presenters is 15-year-old rapper Zoe Kabuye, also known as MC Loy, who has rapped on Uganda’s high youth unemployment:

“Even with a degree or diploma finding work is still a drama.”

And on the country’s plastic bag ban:

“Major supermarket chains have shared more good news

“From now on recyclable paper is the only bag they will use.”

More recently, she covered a story about a cancer crisis in Uganda:

NewzBeat presenters Zoe Kabuye, also known as MC Loy, Sharon Bwogi, also known as Lady Slyke, and her daughter, Zion Sheebah, in the show’s Kampala studio.

PHOTO Amy Fallon

“Earlier this year the cancer institute’s only radiotherapy machine broke down

“Beyond repair leaving many cancer patients across the country in despair.”

KIDS ARE TUNING IN

Before *NewzBeat* many children had no interest in news and current affairs.

“Some youth never used to watch news – they hated it and used to say it’s boring,” says MC Loy, who is still in school but also raps in public places in her spare time.

“But many people on Facebook are like ‘What time is *NewzBeat* on?’”

Uganda’s youngest “newsician”, nine-year-old Zion Sheebah, recently joined the program as its youth reporter.

Zion – the daughter of Ugandan rappers Sharon Bwogi, known as Lady Slyke, and Daniel Kisekka, known as DJ Nesta, who are also *NewzBeat* presenters – says children’s rights is her favourite subject to rap about.

NewzBeat is screened in both English and Uganda’s local language, Luganda, on channel NTV every Saturday and Sunday. It runs for five minutes and has local, regional and international stories. About 160,000 people watch every episode.

It is now also screening in Tanzania, and hopes to expand to other African countries.



South African students from Chief Albert Luthuli Primary and High School in Daveyton on June 15 in Johannesburg to mark the 40th anniversary of the 1976 uprising in Soweto against apartheid. PHOTO Mujahid Safodien/AFP



Around the world – Venice

BY Dallas Kilponen

Here I have captured some kids playing chase around a fountain in the courtyard of the Doge’s Palace in St Mark’s Square in Venice.

It is a tourist highlight, with its incredible architecture, grand rooms and ornate artworks. The palace was built between 1172 and 1178 but two huge fires,

the first in 1483 and the next in 1547, destroyed most of the original building.

In 1797 the palace was ruled by the French after Napoleon occupied Italy but was returned to the people of Italy in 1866.

A gondolier on the Grand Canal in Venice at dusk. PHOTOS Dallas Kilponen

