



MINISTRY OF ICT AND  
NATIONAL GUIDANCE



## UGANDA COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION

### TOWARDS A DIGITAL REVOLUTION AND INCLUSION OF THE MARGINALISED: ADDRESSING ACCESSIBILITY FACTORS

Today, December 7, 2023, Uganda is delighted to join the African continent to commemorate the African Telecommunications Day.

This year's theme, *"Towards a Digital Revolution, addressing accessibility factors"*, resonates directly with Government of Uganda's initiatives towards fostering social-economic transformation across the populace with the recognition of ICTs as one of the key transformational drivers.

In line with Sustainable Development Goal 5 on Gender Equality; 9 on Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure; and 10 on Reduced Inequalities; the Uganda Vision 2040 earmarks ICTs as a key enabler for fostering social economic transformation, including through skilling of the youth, especially in the field of Science, Technology, Engineering, and Innovation (STEI), as a measure of empowering them to make informed developmental choices. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development recognises that the spread of ICTs and global interconnectedness has great potential to accelerate human progress, to bridge the digital divide and to develop knowledge societies. This implies that innovations and technology are engines for advancing gender equality and women's empowerment by increasing women's access to education and employment.

The Digital Uganda Vision further underpins the country's goal of empowering its citizens, striving to achieve the goals of universal inclusion, sustainable development, economic progress, and poverty eradication through digital innovation, combining initiatives across multiple sectors by 2040.

The Ministry of ICT and National Guidance Digital Transformation roadmap 2023/24 – 2027/28 further ties into the vision to drive digital inclusion, while the National ICT Policy prioritises the mainstreaming of Women, Youth, PWDs and other marginalised groups.

#### PWDs Initiatives

The Government of Uganda, through Uganda Communications Universal Services and Access Fund (UCUSAF), partnered with the National Union of Persons with Disabilities of Uganda (NUDIPU) in a project to promote digital inclusion for Persons with Disabilities through the use of ICT-enabled technologies. The programme sought first to profile the PWDs and Organisations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs) across the country on a digital observatory platform (both web and mobile based) <https://observatory.ict4personswithdisabilities.org/> to simplify the



*The Commission empowers youth with digital skills*

day-to-day life of PWDs and their caretakers; equip the PWDs with digital literacy skills and create awareness of ICT access and their potential; and finally establish a framework for promoting innovation development and access to ICT by PWDs.

In order to map the needs of PWDs to foster informed decisions, UCC carried out a survey on the status of ICTs amongst the PWDs, with important statistical insights captured on the key barriers to ICT access and usage for PWDs.

To date, over 40,000 PWDs across the country have been profiled and equipped with digital literacy skills and awareness on ICT access and their potential. A USSD code \*255\*65# has also been created to support the PWDs observatory. Up to 5,000 girls and women have been trained in digital literacy skills in the past three years under the UCC collaboration with NUWODU.

To address the communications challenges and foster inclusion, the UCC further implemented the development of guidelines for access to television content by PWDs that set out requirements that include subtitling or captioning, sign language and audio description. The guidelines seek to steer the TV broadcast industry into adoption of assistive functions like sign language

or subtitles for the benefit of Persons with Disabilities in newscasts and in live telecasts of national events as provided for under the Persons with the Disabilities Act.

#### Women's initiatives

UCC is cognisant of the existing gender gap in the access and use of technology. The International Telecommunications Union (ITU) 2020 report on bridging the gender digital divide indicates that globally over 40% of women are still offline. This is more pronounced in developing countries such as Uganda, with the same report indicating that in Africa, over 70% of women are still offline.

In Uganda, access, digital literacy, and online safety have been identified as one of the factors that need to be addressed to close the gender digital divide. It is against this background that UCC partnered with UCUSAF on a country-wide programme to empower women through digital skilling to enhance efficiency and productivity in their livelihoods.

To date, UCC in collaboration with the Women in Technology Uganda has empowered over 6,000 women have undergone this training in various districts of Uganda, including Kagadi, Alebtong, Kanungu, Kalangala, Napak, Ntoroko, Koboong, Lamwo, Moyo, Sironko, Ngora and Agago. Others are, Butambala, Namayingo, Kumi, Pader, Katakwi, Amuria, Kaberamaido, Abim, Kibuku, Kaliro, Bundibudgyo, Namisindwa, Nakaseke, Bulambuli, Amudat, Amolatar, Butaleja, Gomba, Budaka, Bulisa, Kakumiro, Pallisa and Rubanda.

This annual programme is to be extended to other districts of Uganda where a further 2,000 women are to be trained this financial year, 2023/24.

#### Elderly's initiatives

Both the National Development Plans and Vision 2040 have provisions for the welfare of the elderly. Besides, Uganda is a signatory to the 2002 Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing 2002, whose recommendations include personal development, health, and well-being, and creating supportive environments for the elderly.

The elderly (60 years and above) constitute

Accordingly, the UCC has so far trained 524 youth in the districts of Mukono, Kayunga, Mpigi, Luwero and Mubende, and a further 600 are currently undergoing training in the districts of Lira, Gulu, Omoro, Apac, Agago and Pader.

The main goal of the project is to develop and build the capacity of the youth to adopt ICT tools and applications in multimedia content production and related business processes, and thereby, challenge the youths to improve their creativity, innovation, productivity, and competitiveness in national and international markets.

UCC has also empowered the youth in the creative industry through different programmes, including skills development. Over 8,000 youth across the country have been skilled in different film techniques such as lighting, sound and Cinematography to raise the standards of quality in the film

development that can compete internationally.

Through the Content Development Support Programme, a number of youths have also been supported financially to produce relevant and marketable content for both Ugandan and international markets. This initiative has enabled them to create economically viable content that contributes to their social-economic empowerment.

#### Conclusion

While UCC, through UCUSAF, actively engages in digital literacy programs to drive the digital revolution and inclusivity for marginalized communities on the demand side, our commitment extends to impactful supply-side projects. These initiatives aim to enhance overall access, whether shared or individual, fostering a unified approach to bridge diverse access divides across the country.



*Digital empowerment for women*



*UCC supports Mbale school of the Deaf with computers and other assistive devices*



*Women and youths training in Moyo*



*The smiles of new smart device owners*