

INPUTS FOR STUDY ON THE SOLUTIONS TO PROMOTE DIGITAL EDUCATION FOR YOUNG PEOPLE AND TO ENSURE THEIR PROTECTION FROM ONLINE THREATS

Submitted By: Mulondo Nicholas

Founder: Kisa Kya Mukama Outreach Foundation

Email: mulonick88@gmail.com

Website: <https://kisakyamukama.org/>

Location: Masaka – Uganda, East Africa

1. What are the main challenges that young people in your country face in accessing digital education? Please consider the specific situation of marginalized young people and those in vulnerable situations in your response.

The main challenges that young people in Uganda face in accessing digital education include a lack of digital literacy, limited access to digital infrastructure, and the digital divide that disproportionately affects marginalized and vulnerable groups. Addressing these challenges requires targeted interventions that prioritize the needs of these groups and increased investment in digital infrastructure and education.

The Uganda Digital Rights & Inclusion 2020 Report by Paradigm Initiative highlights the digital divide worsened by the COVID-19 pandemic, which has disproportionately affected marginalized and vulnerable groups. The report calls for increased investment in digital infrastructure and education to ensure that all young people have access to digital education

The United Nations Development Programme published a report on the resources and needs of vulnerable and marginalized young people on digital literacy, safety and participation. The report highlights the need for greater digital literacy and digital citizenship education of children and young people so they can harness the educational, civic and economic opportunities of an increasingly connected world, while also learning skills to protect themselves from online risks and harms.

It is further reported in the Study on access and usage of ICTs by Persons With Disabilities (PWDs) (UCC, 2018) that 12.4% of Ugandans are living with some form of disability, with visual impairments being the most prevalent at 7.2% and audio impairments at 3.6% respectively. The levels of utilization of communication services among persons with some form of disability has been reported as very low

2. What steps is the Government taking to ensure that digital education is accessible and promoted among young people? Please provide examples of specific laws and regulations, measures, policies, and programmes directed at ensuring young people's universal access to digital education.

The current laws and policies in Uganda need to be revised as they continue to limit young people's universal access to digital education. On 30th May 2018, the Parliament of Uganda passed the Excise Duty Amendment Act which ordered users of social media to pay Shs. 200 (\$0.05) each day to access it. The refusal by the government to suspend the implementation of the Over-The-Top (OTT) tax, despite several appeals from different stakeholders, has continued to undermine the efforts to increase access to and affordability of ICT digital education for a large proportion of the population, thus denying them access to critical information disseminated on social media platforms.

The legal regime governing the digital sphere in Uganda includes the Uganda Communications Act 2013, Anti-Pornography Act 2014, Regulation of Interception of Communications Act 2010, Registration of Person Act 2015, the National Information Technology Authority Uganda Act (Act No.4 of 2009) and the Electronic Signatures Act 2011(Act No.7 of 2011)

3. What steps is the Government taking to ensure that young people can realize their human rights online in a safe, empowering, and inclusive way?

The Ministry of Education and Sports in Uganda has developed a 5-year Digital Agenda Strategy to promote digital education in the country. The strategy aims to enhance digital literacy and skills development, promote innovation and commercialization of ICT products, and support the development and uptake of emerging technologies such as Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) Technologies.

The Digital Education Standards and Guidelines (DESG) have been developed as a guide to implement the Digital Agenda in the education sector. The DESG provide standards and guidelines for management and governance, ICT infrastructure and systems, pedagogy, and content development.

The Uganda Communications Commission (UCC) has also developed a National Broadband Policy to increase access to broadband services in the country. The policy aims to provide affordable and reliable broadband services to all Ugandans, including those in rural and remote areas.

The Uganda Digital Acceleration Program has identified vulnerable and marginalized groups as a key area of focus in their framework. The program recognizes that these groups face unique challenges in accessing digital education and aims to address these challenges through targeted interventions

4. What are the main gaps and challenges to young people's protection from online threats in law, policy, and practice in your country and the impacts on young people's human rights? Please consider the specific situation of marginalized young people and those in vulnerable situations in your response.

The Internet Society Uganda Chapter surveyed the legal and regulatory frameworks affecting child online protection in Uganda. Their report shows that despite the growing use of the internet by children, the notion to protect children online is new in Uganda and Africa as a whole. As such, there is little or no documented evidence on online behavior for young children on the continent. Although legal and regulatory frameworks have been adopted, these too are inadequate in addressing child online safety. The study acknowledges cyberstalking, cyberbullying, and cyber harassment as the topmost challenges faced by children while using the internet. The report recommends the need to adopt a unified law that strictly addresses child online protection in Uganda, the restriction of accessing online pornography especially in public places, and massive awareness about the dangers of the internet especially by educating children about responsible use of the internet.

A report by the Digital Human Rights Lab highlights the challenges faced by children in Uganda while using the internet. The report shows that 30% of the children interviewed reported suffering abuse and threats online. There is a high illiteracy level on children's safety online among the children, teachers, and parents/guardians. 71% of children believe online studies are helpful in bridging the learning gap.

The findings indicate that Legal and regulatory frameworks in Uganda are inadequate in addressing child online safety. Therefore, it is important to have a unified law that strictly addresses child online protection in Uganda and to educate children about responsible use of the internet.

5. What steps is the Government taking to ensure that young people are protected from online threats? Please provide examples of specific laws and regulations, measures, policies, and programmes.

The Government of Uganda has taken several steps to ensure that young people are protected from online threats. The Digital Education Standards and Guidelines (DESG) have been developed as a guide to implement the Digital Agenda in the education sector. The DESG provide standards and guidelines for management and governance, ICT infrastructure and systems, pedagogy, and content development

The Digital Human Rights Lab program seeks to integrate digital innovations to advance human rights in Uganda. The program hosted an Innovation program in 2021 to promote safe digital education among young people

REFERENCES

1. <https://paradigmhq.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Ir-Uganda-Digital-Rights-Inclusion-2020-Report.pdf>
2. <https://www.undp.org/publications/resources-and-needs-vulnerable-and-marginalized-young-people-digital-literacy-safety-and-participation>
3. [UCC-Strategic-Plan-202021-202425-ONLINE-VERSION-002_Rev2Final.pdf](#)
4. <https://www.education.go.ug/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/Standards-for-Digital-Learning-Draft1.pdf>
5. <https://isoc.ug/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Advancing-the-plight-of-child-online-in-Uganda.pdf>
6. https://digitalhumanrightslab.org/documents/45/Full_report_-_Childrens_safety_online.pdf