RESTLESS DEVELOPMENT

CIPESA

CLAIMING OUR DIGITAL SPACE

A YOUTH CALL TO ACTION FOR SAFE, INCLUSIVE AND GENDER-RESPONSIVE ONLINE SPACES IN UGANDA



During the Uganda Internet Governance Week 2026 (27th - 30th July, Kampala), convened by the Internet Society Uganda Chapter, Restless Development and partners, young people brought evidence, lived experiences and solutions to national conversations on artificial intelligence, online safety and digital rights governance.

67.1% of respondents use AI tools for learning and skills development.

According to the Youth AI Survey 2026, conducted by the University of Cambridge's Centre for Human-Inspired Artificial Intelligence (CHIA), Makerere University, and Restless Development, 609 young people aged 18-35 surveyed in March 2026 found that 67.1% of respondents use AI tools for learning and skills development. However, significant barriers remain, including affordability challenges, unequal access, and gaps in translating digital knowledge into economic opportunities. More importantly, young people continue to navigate online spaces where safety, privacy, and freedom of expression are threatened by technology-facilitated gender-based violence (TFGBV), misinformation, and harmful online practices.

Through the MyDigitalRights project funded by CIPESA, ten Digital Rights Champions brought youth perspectives to the national stage through lightning talks and policy conversations, highlighting the urgent need for digital spaces that are safe, inclusive, and accountable. The Champions are a diverse group of young digital rights advocates, media professionals, and social media influencers working to make Uganda's digital spaces safer, rights-based, and more inclusive. Drawing on their experiences, evidence, and engagement during Uganda Internet Governance Week, they developed this Call to Action to amplify young people's priorities and recommendations for Uganda's digital future.

Who is this Call to Action for?

This Call to Action is primarily directed to the Government of Uganda, particularly the Ministry of ICT and National Guidance, Uganda Communications Commission, and the Personal Data Protection Office. It also calls on technology companies, academia, and civil society to take action within their respective roles to build a safer, inclusive, and rights-based digital environment for young people.

OUR CALL TO ACTION

1. Institutionalise meaningful youth participation in digital governance.

Ensure young people are meaningfully involved in the design, implementation, and evaluation of digital policies, recognising their insights, experiences, and needs as critical to effective and equitable digital governance. Establish sustained meaningful participation mechanisms, including a standing youth and AI advisory panel. The AI advisory panel should comprise diverse young people with expertise and lived experience in AI, digital rights, and gender. The Panel should meet regularly and be consulted on proposed AI and digital policies, regulations, and programmes, with its recommendations responded to.

2. Data Protection

The Personal Data Protection Office should strengthen the enforcement of the Data Protection and Privacy Act, 2019 (Act No. 9 of 2019), and the Data Protection and Privacy Regulations, 2021 (S.I. No. 21 of 2021), to safeguard user privacy and build trust in digital platforms. With 700,000 youth entering the labour market annually, we need stronger legal protections for online platform workers, including SafeBoda riders, delivery couriers, and other gig workers, to address the growing use of automated algorithms in decisions affecting their pay, ratings, job allocation, and access to work.

YOUTH PARTICIPATION • DATA PROTECTION • ACCOUNTABILITY

3. Prevent and respond to technology-facilitated-gender-based-violence (TFGBV)

Following the Constitutional Court's 17 March 2026 ruling in **Alternative Digitallk Limited and Others v Attorney General,** Uganda has an opportunity to strengthen and clarify its legal and policy framework for online harms. As digital spaces increasingly become sites of harassment, abuse and gender-based violence, Uganda should ensure that its laws and response systems adequately protect people from technology-facilitated GBV while upholding constitutional rights and freedoms.

- Legal and policy responses should explicitly recognize technology-facilitated abuse as a form of gender-based violence (GBV), ensuring clarity, enforceability, and alignment with existing national and sub-county GBV prevention and response mechanisms. Survivors of online abuse should be entitled to the same protections, support services, and legal remedies as those experiencing offline violence.
- The Government should require digital platforms operating in Uganda to provide accessible and locally relevant reporting mechanisms, time-bound escalation procedures for serious abuse, transparent moderation decisions, effective appeals and periodic reports on online abuse affecting users in Uganda.
- Uganda Communications Commission, Personal Data Protection Office, Uganda Police Force and other relevant justice and GBV-response institutions should establish confidential, accessible and youth-friendly reporting mechanisms for digital abuse. These mechanisms should include simplified reporting channels, protection from retaliation, and clear referral pathways to psychosocial, legal, and health support services.

SAFE REPORTING • SURVIVOR SUPPORT • CLEAR REMEDIES

4. Expand Rural Connectivity

The Ministry of ICT and National Guidance, Uganda Communications Commission, and relevant public and private-sector actors should implement programmes that accelerate universal access to affordable internet services and digital devices, with particular attention to young people in rural, low-income and underserved communities. Work towards making 1 GB of mobile data cost no more than 1% of average monthly income.

5. Leave no one behind in Uganda's digital future

Digital policies and online safety initiatives must be disability-inclusive by design, ensuring that young people with disabilities are not left behind in Uganda's digital transformation

6. Advance digital awareness and empowerment

- The Ministry of Education, in collaboration with the Ministry of ICT and National Guidance, should strengthen and standardise digital literacy education, including education on AI within the formal and non-formal learning systems, moving beyond basic device use to include include using and navigating online platforms critical thinking, identifying credible information, critical thinking, identifying credible information, and safe online practices.
- Young people should be informed about accessible channels for reporting digital abuse, data breaches, and rights violations.

7. Turn young people's AI skills into income and opportunity

The Ministry of ICT and National Guidances hould establish a dedicated Youth AI Innovation Window within the National ICT Innovation Support Programme (NIISP), providing competitive grants to young AI innovators to develop, test and scale locally relevant AI solutions.

Our collective call

As Digital Rights Champions contributing to Uganda's digital future, we call on the government, regulators, technology companies, development partners, academia and civil society to turn these commitments into measurable action.

Young people must not be consulted only after digital policies and technologies have been designed. We must have a meaningful role from the outset in shaping, implementing and evaluating the systems that increasingly determine how we learn, work, communicate and participate in society.

Endorsed by:

Digital Rights Champions, MyDigitalRights Project, Restless Development Uganda
(See Below)

The Digital Rights Champions

Miranda Violet Bagamba



Miranda Violet Bagamba is a Communications and Advocacy professional with experience across nonprofit sectors. Her work spans strategic communications, digital media, advocacy, stakeholder engagement, partnerships, and storytelling. She is passionate about using communication to amplify important issues, strengthen advocacy efforts, and create greater awareness around SRHR and digital rights.

Mbalya Derick



Mbalya Derick, popularly known as Dric Adoni, is a communications and public relations professional, digital storyteller and youth advocate. He works with the Uganda Network of Young People Living with HIV/AIDS (UNYPA), using strategic communication to amplify young people's voices and challenge stigma. His advocacy focuses on HIV, sexual and reproductive health and rights, gender-based violence, digital rights and youth participation. As a Digital Rights Champion, he promotes accurate information and safer, more inclusive digital spaces where young people can connect, speak out and advocate for their rights.

Misheline Mutuzo



Misheline is a Ugandan feminist, legal scholar at Makerere University, and Women Human Rights Defender whose work focuses on gender justice, feminist advocacy, civic engagement, and human rights. She has contributed to conversations and advocacy around women's rights, structural inequalities, and the gendered impacts of political and social systems.

Hindu Luyinda



Hindu Luyinda is a disability rights advocate passionate about youth empowerment, digital rights, SRHR, and inclusion. She works to promote the participation of young people with disabilities in leadership, employment, and community decision-making. She is also passionate about Deaf inclusion and creating opportunities for people with disabilities to be heard and participate fully in society.

Mulungi Faith



Digital Rights Champion-Restless Development,
Menstrual Justice Advocate and Feminist
Digital Communications Consultant

Hellena Angella Nagawa



Pharmacist, SRHR Advocate, Founder AfriCONHE Uganda

Lutaaya Joshua Kimbowa



Lutaaya Joshua Kimbowa is a lawyer, SRHR advocate, and digital rights champion dedicated to advancing bodily autonomy, human rights, and equitable tech governance. Working at the intersection of legal advocacy, digital policy, and youth inclusion, he leads strategic campaigns that empower communities, safeguard online safety, and ensure marginalized voices shape the future of digital and reproductive rights.

Samantha Agasha



Samantha Agasha works at the intersection of communications and research, translating knowledge and lived experiences into narratives that support social change. Her work focuses on amplifying marginalized voices, and fostering safer, more inclusive online and offline spaces for women and girls. She is the Communications Lead at Femme Forte Uganda and a co-author of Aga Khan University research on sexual and gender-based violence against women in sports in East Africa.

Jovia Kusiima



Jovia Kusiima is a Project Manager, Menstrual Justice Educator and Founder of Greater Impact Africa. She also serves as Vice Chairperson of the European Union Youth Sounding Board Season 2. As a Digital Rights Champion, Jovia advocates for public health, quality education, youth leadership and inclusive spaces where young people, especially young women, can access information, make informed decisions, speak out and lead change in their communities.

Nakayiza Safina
