...during the third term... ...are operational, while the schools. ...respective local governments.

Experts seek increased funding to boost girls in technical training

By John Masaba

The Uganda Vocational and Technical Assessment Board (UVTAB) has appealed for increased targeted scholarships and tool-kit bursaries to boost the participation of young women in technical and vocational education.

UVTAB deputy executive secretary Dr Wilfred Nahamya noted that while female enrolment in technical and vocational education and training (TVET) institutions is steadily rising, high training costs and deep-rooted cultural stereotypes continue to limit girls' entry and progression in male-dominated technical fields.

He added that society's perception of vocational training is gradually changing, but barriers still block girls from pursuing courses such as engineering, plumbing and electrical installation.

"For most of our traditions, girls were not supposed to do certain things. Traditional biases dictated that a girl cannot climb poles or construct buildings," Nahamya said.

"But our trend statistics are changing. We are seeing girls increasingly taking up plumbing and electrical installation, while they already dominate about three-quarters of fields like fashion and design."

CULTURAL INERTIA SHAPING CAREERS

Beyond cultural barriers, UVTAB officials said the cost of technical training remains a major challenge for many families, especially girls.

Unlike purely academic programmes, he noted, TVET courses require additional expenses such as specialised tools, protective gear and practical training materials.

Nahamya called for a shift in sponsorship models to include not only tuition support, but also start-up toolkits for graduates to enable them to immediately enter the job market.

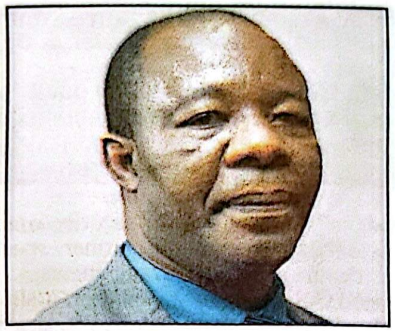
"Girls need more support, so that when they complete plumbing or electrical installation, they can start their own enterprise," he said.

Nahamya was speaking during an event to announce commencement of the May/June national TVET exams at UVTAB headquarters in Kyambogo, Kampala on Saturday.

A total of 47,774 candidates have been registered to sit for the exams.

The assessments begin today and will run until June 8 across 544 centres nationwide, covering a wide range of disciplines under TVET

The candidates are drawn from technology education and training,



Nahamya

business education, home science and agriculture programmes, with technical vocational education accounting for the largest share of enrolment.

Of the total, 24,493 are male, while 23,281 are female.

In a statement issued on Saturday, UVTAB executive secretary Onesmus Oyesigye, said the exercise is anchored in the TVET Act, 2025, which strengthened the board's mandate to assess and certify competence-based learning.

"The exams will be conducted across 544 assessment centres nationwide," Oyesigye said, adding that they have registered a total of 165 candidates with special needs, including learners with visual and hearing impairments, physical disabilities, amputations and chronic illnesses such as asthma, sickle cell disease and diabetes.

SEVERE PENALTIES

To protect the integrity of the exercise, UVTAB has deployed over 500 scouts and 200 practical assessors to monitor centres and conduct spot checks.

"We warn all candidates and stakeholders against involvement in examination malpractice, which attracts severe penalties under sections 101 to 108 of the TVET Act, 2025," Oyesigye warned.

He added that heads of centres have been instructed to display candidates' registers alongside examination offences and penalties as part of deterrence measures.

Meanwhile, distribution of assessment materials to regional storage centres began on Saturday under police escort, following preparatory briefings for co-ordinators and candidates earlier in the month.

Oyesigye reaffirmed UVTAB's commitment to strengthening competence-based training and improving employability outcomes.

MAJOR REFORMS

The assessments come at a time when Uganda's skilling sector is undergoing major reforms under the TVET Act, which introduced mandatory registration and licensing for institutions and practitioners, including artisans such as mechanics, tailors and hairdressers.

The law also established a skills development fund financed through a 1% levy on private employers' gross monthly payrolls, aimed at supporting equipment upgrades, trainer development and student sponsorships.

However, some analysts say some implementation challenges persist.

Parliamentary records and sector reviews indicate delays in funding releases have slowed key reforms, including curriculum rollout and inspection activities.

Discussions are also ongoing over overlapping mandates between the TVET council and the National Curriculum Development Centre, particularly in regulating diploma-level technical institutions.

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