

By Simon Okitefa

The National Information Technology Authority - Uganda (NITA-U), in collaboration with key partners, has intensified efforts to promote digital inclusion for persons with disabilities (PWDs), signalling a renewed commitment to ensuring equitable access to Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs).

Implemented under the Uganda Digital Acceleration Project - Government Network (UDAP-GovNet), a high-level stakeholder engagement was convened on Thursday at Nakawa Innovation Hub to discuss strategies to boost inclusivity.

This follows a successfully concluded three-month ICT skills training programme for 38 persons with variable impairments (visual, hearing and physical) which aimed at equipping the participants with essential digital skills to enhance their daily lives, education and

NITA-U, partners advance digital inclusion for PWDs

economic opportunities.

"We are eager to tap into the rich knowledge and experiences of all stakeholders present so that we can design more meaningful and effective solutions to better serve persons with disabilities. The series of programmes are aimed at bridging the accessibility gap and empowering PWDs to participate fully in the digital economy," said Edmond Machelli, the project coordinator for UDAP-GovNet at NITA-U.

STRENGTHENING ACCESSIBILITY

The engagement emphasised the need for websites, mobile applications and e-government platforms to comply with international accessibility standards, such as the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG).

By integrating features like screen reader compatibility,

BETWEEN THE LINES

Persons with disabilities (PWDs) have historically faced barriers ranging from inaccessible digital platforms to limited assistive technologies and inadequate digital literacy support.

captioning, alternative text for images and simplified navigation, these platforms will become more user-friendly for persons with visual, hearing and cognitive impairments.

Officials also highlighted that accessibility is not just a technical requirement but a fundamental right.

Inclusive digital design, they stress, ensures that no citizen is left behind as Uganda transitions into a knowledge-



Machelli

based economy.

"Before this training, I struggled with basic digital tools. Today, I can confidently use a computer, navigate the internet and even create digital content. This programme has opened doors I never thought were possible for someone like me. I now feel included in the digital world," Simon Peter Kaggwa, a visually-impaired beneficiary of the programme highlighted.

PERSISTENT CHALLENGES

Despite the positive strides, limited funding, low awareness of accessibility standards, and the high cost of assistive technologies continue to hinder widespread adoption.

Additionally, connectivity gaps in rural areas disproportionately affect PWDs.

"NITA-U has acknowledged these barriers and is working with stakeholders to explore sustainable solutions, including subsidies for assistive devices, expanded broadband coverage and incentives for developers to prioritise inclusive design," Julian Rweju, the director e-government services at NITA-U, emphasised.

By fostering an inclusive digital ecosystem, Uganda is not only upholding the rights of PWDs but also unlocking their potential as active contributors to national development.

FOREX RATES

CURRENCY	BUY	SELL
US DOLLAR	3,765	3,775
EURO	4,381	4,394
POUND	5,074	5,089
KENYA SH	29.0	29.1
TZ SH	1.42	1.45
DHIRAM	1,025	1,027
S.A.RAND	229.9	230.6
JAPANESE YEN	23.6	23.7
RWANDESE FRANCS	2.5	2.6
DOLLAR OLDER & SMALLER	3,500	3,768

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RATES ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE

The continued commitment of NITA-U and its partners signal a future where technology serves as a bridge, rather than a barrier for every Ugandan, regardless of ability, to thrive in the digital age.