

## LETTER OF THE DAY

# Let's equip more women with digital literacy skills

On March 8, the world marked the 116th anniversary of International Women's Day, a global moment dedicated to celebrating women's achievements and advancing gender equality.

The day traces its origins from 1910 when German activist Clara Zetkin proposed the idea during the International Socialist Women's Conference in Copenhagen, Denmark's capital.

What began as a movement advocating for women's rights has since evolved into a global platform highlighting issues such as equality, economic participation, and the elimination of gender-based violence.

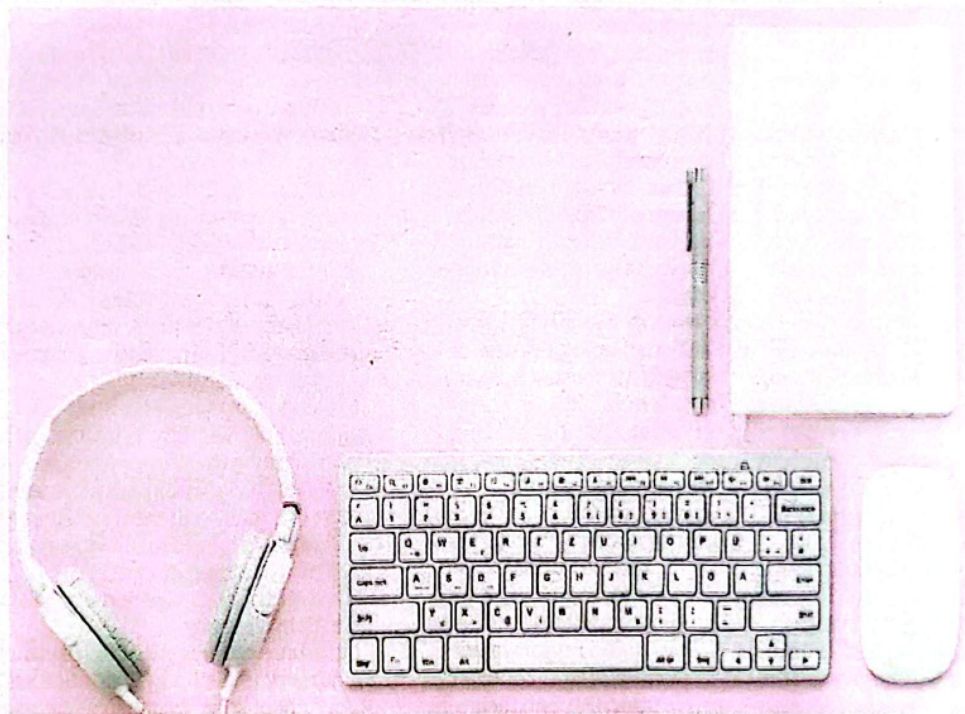
Today, another critical dimension has emerged in the conversation about women's empowerment: digital inclusion.

Globally, women make up 49.7 percent of the population. In Uganda, they account for 51 percent, according to the 2024 census, positioning them as key contributors to digital innovation and economic growth as users, content creators, entrepreneurs, and leaders.

Their participation is shaping both the national economy and the broader digital landscape, which has levelled ground.

Women are now leading innovations across sectors like health, agriculture, fintech, and e-commerce.

Notable examples include Phyllis Kyomuhendo, who developed the M-Scan portable ultrasound for early pregnancy diagnostics; Stella Nakirija, a Makerere University graduate who developed a solar-powered tick detector to help farmers reduce livestock losses and improve productivity; Sherifah Tumusiime, founder of Zimba Women, a digital platform supporting women entrepreneurs



across Africa, and many others.

Beyond formal innovations, technology is also enabling everyday economic participation. Many women run mobile money outlets, contributing to financial inclusion and local economic growth.

Others have ventured into online businesses, using social media platforms such as TikTok and WhatsApp to trade products and services, thereby improving their livelihoods.

Digital Empowerment has also amplified women's visibility and achievements.

Just recently, Zaina Kigenyi, a content creator and make-up artist, gained international attention when she set a Guinness World record for applying lipstick to nine people in just 60 seconds! Have we forgotten Mama D's Kitchen who gained widespread attention

for her record-breaking longest cooking marathon in December 2023? Without digital empowerment and online visibility, such achievements are hardly realised.

This success is partly attributed to women digital literacy capacity building initiatives, championed by both the government and private sector.

Telecom companies are also doing their best to ensure that women are digitally empowered.

However, challenges remain. Globally, only 30 percent of female students pursue academic programmes in Science and Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) fields, with just 3 percent graduating annually.

In Uganda, only 19 percent of women use the internet compared to 27 percent of men, a

visible gap that underscores the urgent need to equip more women with the skills necessary to thrive in a fast-evolving digital economy.

Bridging this gap is crucial, not just for equality, but for sustainable social, political and economic development as a country. A woman skilled in mobile banking, cybersecurity, or data analytics is a key stakeholder in shaping the country's progress.

Every digital wallet transaction, an innovation, or any online business managed by a woman demonstrates their transformative journey from the women of the past to today's digitally empowered women, whose future is secure.

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