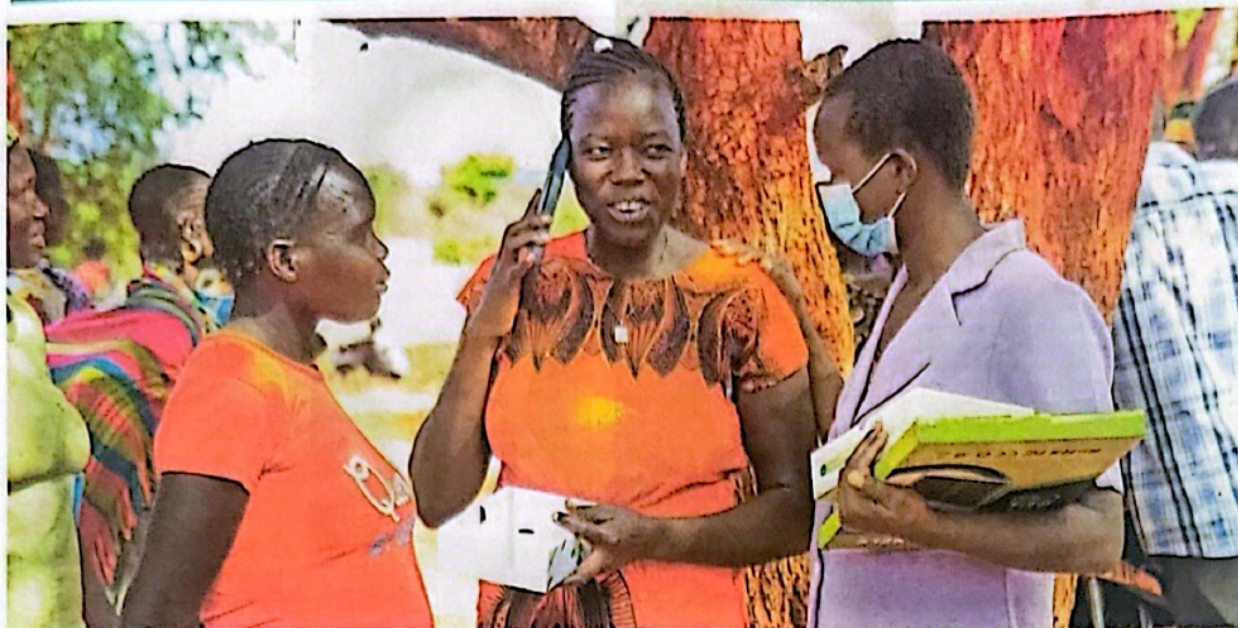




The National Vision 2040 recognizes ICT access as a major business opportunity. PHOTOS/COURTESY

Why there is need for a robust digital infrastructure

World Telecommunication and Information Society Day (WTISD) 2026 calls on governments, industry, and communities to strengthen the digital lifelines that keep the world running.

BY TREVOR LUTALO

World Telecommunication and Information Society Day (WTISD) is celebrated annually on May 17. This day was established by the United Nations and the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) – the global governing body in telecommunications – to raise awareness about the importance of using information and communication technologies (ICT) for the development of society and the economy.

Last year, ITU, which brings together 194 national governments and over 1,000 companies and organizations to advance global connectivity, commemorated its 160th anniversary, highlighting its long-standing role in advancing global connectivity and fostering international cooperation.

The 2026 theme, "Digital lifelines – Strengthening resilience in a connected world," reflects the growing need for robust digital infrastructure that supports essential services, public safety and economic continuity. The theme also calls on

governments, industry, and communities to strengthen the digital lifelines that keep the world running.

"Digital resilience underpins universal meaningful connectivity – the ability for everyone, to access and use the Internet safely, affordably, and effectively. Resilience needs to be designed and included in every element of connectivity: submarine cables linking continents, terrestrial networks carrying data across cities, satellites supporting communication and navigation, and data centers powering digital services. When any part of this chain fails, essential systems, from finance and healthcare to transport and disaster response, are at risk," according to the World Telecommunications Day website.

"Today, many networks remain vulnerable in the face of growing threats, such as extreme weather events and mega earthquakes. Every day, invisible digital systems help keep the world running. They warn communities when disasters approach. Guide navigation across land, sea and air. Carry the

data that connects continents. These systems form the digital lifelines that underpin modern life."

In Uganda, the occasion presents an opportunity to reflect on the progress made and recommit on the building of a digitally inclusive society where no one is left behind.

"The continued expansion of resilient digital infrastructure, affordable connectivity, digital skills and safe online environments will remain essential in unlocking the full potential of ICTs in Uganda," a statement from Uganda Communications Commission – which has remained at the center of these efforts – reads in part.

The importance

Recognizing the importance of digital literacy for inclusive development, the government has since implemented various programmes to enhance digital skills among its citizens. Interventions such as the National ICT Initiatives Support Programme (NIISP) and the Presidential Digital Talent Programme (PDTP) aim to equip youth with the necessary skills to participate in the digital economy.

The National Vision 2040 recognizes ICT access as a major business opportunity, used to transform various sectors in the country including tourism, health, education, governance, innova-

OPPORTUNITY

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tion, financial inclusion and agriculture among others.

Uganda's ICT sector, which contributes over nine percent to the national GDP and employs about 2.3 million people, including youths.

"ICTs have been used to

promote e-learning, which has made it possible for students to access quality education, even in remote areas. The Ministry of Education and Sports, in collaboration with the UCC, has implemented the National Education Management Information System (NEMIS), which aims to improve the management of education data in the country. UCUSAF has also partnered with the Research and Education Network in Uganda (RENU) to provide reliable and affordable internet to secondary schools in the unserved and underserved parts of the country," according to

a statement from the Communications Commission.

In the agriculture sector, ICTs have been used to improve agricultural productivity and access to services. Under UCUSAF, the government collaborated with the National Farmers' Union to bring farmers' voices across the entire value chain, such as inputs and information, markets.

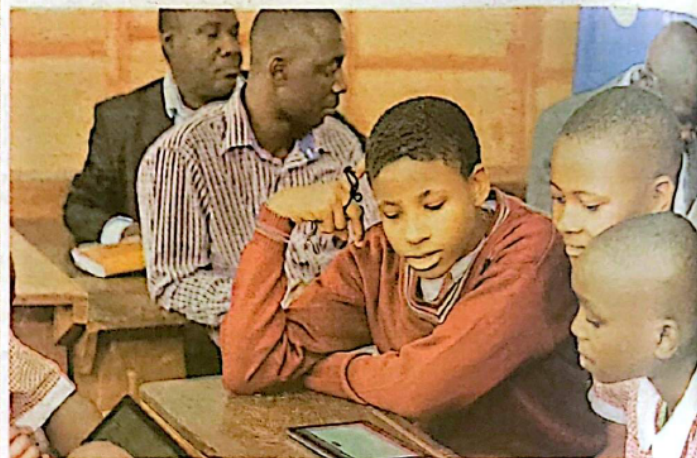
Government has also invested in providing broadband in the national backbone across the country. This includes enhancing access, mobile network coverage, and road infrastructure to ensure seamless communication and accessibility for tourists.

According to UCC, various e-health initiatives have improved access to health services in the country. These have been implemented.

"For instance, the Ministry of Health, in collaboration with the UCC, has implemented the eHealth strategy, which aims to improve the delivery of health services through ICTs. The government's ICT strategy also bridges the digital divide, resonating with a number of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) aligned to the country's social-economic transformation agenda."

The message from Secretary General António Guterres is clear – "We must invest in connectivity – from seabed cables to satellites – from local access to global standards and digital skills."

"We must implement the Global Digital Compact to advance rights-based governance and strengthen cooperation across governments, industry and civil society. Digital infrastructure is an essential public good so let us build it to withstand the crises ahead. When digital lifelines are universal and safe, every community can prepare, respond and recover."



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