

She gets us home safely. Who protects her?

Last week, I ordered an Uber at around 8pm after a meeting. When the driver's details appeared on my phone, I felt something I did not expect - relief. And, if I am honest, a small sense of pride. The name was female.

When she arrived, I smiled and said, "I am so glad you are a woman." She laughed. "Most women cancel when they see I'm a female driver. But men prefer me." Let's call her Sarah.

As we drove, she shared her story. She works mostly in the evenings. That is when rides are more frequent and the money is better. But it is also when things can go wrong.

One night, she picked up a man from a bar. During the ride, he began making advances. She told him to stop. He became aggressive. At one point, he pulled out what looked like a gun and grabbed her by the neck.

She started hooting nonstop to draw attention. She zigzagged on the road and spotted a nearby petrol station. Security guards rushed over, overpowered him and forcefully removed him from the car, allowing her to escape. She was very shaken.

On another occasion, a passenger tried to touch her. She refused. He later reported her to the platform, claiming she had seduced him.

She was suspended for two weeks while they "investigated," with no income and no clear explanation. When she told me this, she did not sound angry. Just tired.

Clear safety standards, transparent reporting processes and fair investigations are not luxuries.



Sandra Kirenga
Safety



Today, thousands of Ugandans rely on app-based transport platforms to move around our cities. They have become part of everyday life: how we get to work, attend meetings, pick up our children and move through traffic when it rains. For many households, they are also a vital source of income in a difficult economy.

Yet behind every completed trip is a real person taking a risk.

More women are stepping into roles long dominated by men including transport, logistics and delivery services. That shift matters. It reflects changing opportunities and growing confidence. But it should not mean accepting danger as part of the job.

If a woman is willing to drive strangers

around the city at night to provide for her family, then the systems around her must protect her. This is not about attacking any company. It is about building systems that are fair and safe.

Drivers are thoroughly vetted. Their identification is verified. Passengers, however, often remain anonymous. And when disputes arise, drivers can lose their income immediately while cases are reviewed. That imbalance deserves attention.

As Uganda's digital economy expands, regulation must evolve alongside it. Clear safety standards, transparent reporting processes and fair investigations are not luxuries.

They are foundational to a modern economy. Platforms also carry responsibility. Safety cannot be treated as an afterthought. It must be built into the system from the start.

All of us have a role to play. Men, too, have a responsibility here. Many of these drivers are someone's daughter, sister, wife or mother. Respect is not complicated. A safe ride should mean safe for everyone involved.

Sarah still drives at night. Not because it is easy, but because her family depends on it.

When I got home that night, I locked my door and went inside feeling safe.

I am not sure she felt the same.

Ms Sandra Kirenga is an international development expert and systems thinker based in Kampala.

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