

By Umar Nsubuga

The Uganda Communications Commission (UCC) has rolled out a national campaign urging Ugandans to embrace safer digital practices under the theme: *Safe Products, Confident Consumers*.

The campaign was launched as Uganda joined the rest of the world to commemorate World Consumer Rights Day on March 15.

Regulators, educators, security officials, parents and students gathered from various districts for a series of meetings on protecting children online.

The UCC executive director, George William Nyombi Thembo, noted that the digital revolution has opened unprecedented opportunities for Uganda's youth, but has

# UCC leads national push for safer digital space

also introduced new risks that require urgent collective action.

"Our children are growing up in a highly connected world, where the Internet supports education, creativity, innovation and social interaction," Thembo said in a message delivered at the regional meetings. "However, alongside these opportunities come serious risks that we must confront together".

UCC statistics show that 94.8% of children today know how to use the Internet, while 92% have encountered some form of digital risk, including cyberbullying, harmful

## STUDENTS REACT

Students at the meeting shared experiences of how digital platforms influence their lives. Some highlighted the growing challenge of online betting among learners, while others warned about exposure to harmful videos and misleading information circulating on social media.

content or suspicious online

interactions. About three quarters of young users never report these experiences to parents or guardians.

In Masindi, officials from the information and communications technology (ICT) ministry

joined the regulator in urging schools and parents to treat online safety as a shared

social responsibility rather than a purely regulatory issue.

UCC's consumer affairs specialist Joseph Kizito said the commission is extending its outreach beyond schools to reach young people outside the education system.

"There are youth who are not in school, but still use the Internet every day. Through multimedia training programmes and equipping community libraries with computers and free Internet access, we are ensuring that they also learn how to use digital technologies safely and productively," Kizito said.

UCC has already equipped several public libraries with computers and Internet connectivity to ensure that young people have safe learning spaces.

In Mbarara, the regional engagement brought together district leaders, teachers, students and media practitioners to explore practical strategies for keeping children safe online.

According to UCC's manager for consumer affairs Kenneth Tweheyo, child online protection must be integrated into the design of digital platforms and into everyday school practices.

Zebedee Mwijukye, a district education official, said schools must help learners understand both the benefits and dangers of digital platforms.



Thembo, the UCC executive director