

# AIPS Awards expose widening gap in global sports journalism

**Divided.** Although the ceremony celebrated outstanding storytelling from across continents, it also reinforced a familiar reality: African journalists remain largely absent from the final podium positions.



**Cult hero.** Napoli fans in the stands hold up a sign of Diego Maradona in the stands before a match. Photography and its presentation has become a key tenet of story telling. PHOTO/REUTERS

BY GEORGE KATONGOLE

The latest AIPS Sport Media Awards in Lausanne, Switzerland once again showcased the highest standards of global sports journalism, while also exposing a widening gap between well-resourced media systems and those operating under significant structural constraints.

Although the ceremony celebrated outstanding storytelling from across continents, it also reinforced a familiar reality: African journalists remain largely absent from the final podium positions—and Ugandan journalists have yet to secure any recognition at the AIPS Sport Media Awards. This year's edition attracted 1,987

entries from 130 countries, progressing through five rigorous rounds of judging before winners were selected across writing, photography, audio and video categories. The awards highlighted the global reach and creative depth of sports storytelling. But when final results were announced, Africa's representation at the highest level remained limited.

**A familiar pattern**

African journalists featured in early judging phases and select recognition tiers, with Kenya and Gambia among those acknowledged in supporting categories.

However, the final podium positions continued to be dominated by journalists working within

stronger production ecosystems where teams, funding, and editorial support systems are more established. AIPS president Gianni Merlo summed up the spirit of the competition: "You are all winners, and with the high quality of our work, you've shown the way for the new generation."

Yet within AIPS itself, there is a growing recognition that global excellence is not shaped by talent alone, but by unequal access to tools, training, and production capacity. Across its awards framework and training programmes, AIPS increasingly frames the global media landscape as one defined by structural imbalance rather than lack of ability. "We report results, not meaning"

For former Uganda Sports Press Association (USPA) executive member Leon Ssenyange, now working with CGTN, the gap begins long before the awards stage. He organized the last media awards for USPA about four years ago.

He argues that much of African sports journalism remains stuck in event-driven reporting, rather than story-driven journalism.

"Award-winning stories start from pitching. The question is whether the stories are purpose-driven. We report results, but we don't go beyond them. That is where stories lose depth," he says.

For Ssenyange, this limits global competitiveness. "We are driven by results and rarely interrogate what lies beyond the scoreline."

**Limited quality control**

Ssenyange also points to structural weaknesses in newsroom processes, particularly in sports desks where editorial review is often limited. "For most stories, there is no one questioning them before publication. Much as it depends on the writer's competence, there must be quality control. Too often, stories go out with only one reference," he says. Without stronger editorial systems, he argues, even strong journalism struggles to mature into globally competitive work.

"I don't think we can improve under systems that do not interrogate their own work," he says.

**Freelance journalism**

Ssenyange highlights a deeper transformation reshaping African sports journalism—the rise of freelance reporting. While freelancing has expanded opportunity and increased output, it has also created

**AIPS SPORT MEDIA AWARDS 2025**

**Category winners**

**Video - Short feature:** Henrique Arcoverde (Brazil) – Galeguinho - The Backwards Runner (TV Globo)

**Video - Athlete profile:** Guillaume Priou & Laurie Delhostal (France) – Laure! Laure! Laure! (Canal+)

**Video - documentary:** Fabien Douillard (France) – Crash – Peloton Under Pressure (L'Equipe)

**Sport action photo:** Ray Giubilo (Italy) – It's not Halloween

**Photography - portfolio:** Loïc Venance (France) – Tour de France 2025

**Audio category:** Farzad Sabouri & Seyedeh Nahid Saadati (Iran) – The Snowy Galaxy

**YOUNG REPORTERS**

**Writing:** Salma Niazi (Afghanistan) – You Will Not Grow Up in Silence

**Audio/video:** Charlie Courrent (France) – Alexandre Müller: Rage in the Belly

**Photography:** Eric Wu (Australia) – In Sync

**Investigative reporting:** Baboucarr Fallaboweh (Gambia) – Gambia grass-roots football investigation.

**Africa - special mentions**

**Freedom of press:** Mohamed Osman Adam (Sudan) – Journalist mistreatment in war zones

**Climate change & sustainable sport:** Abiodun Adewale (Nigeria) – Sports vs Plastic pollution

**Fight Against Doping:** Geoffrey Anene (Kenya) – Anti-doping culture challenges

a fragmented ecosystem defined by instability and individualised production. As noted in an ACME Mwalimu analysis titled "Passion: the industry's excuse for keeping journalists broke and busy?", journalism is often framed as a calling where sacrifice is expected.

# Parents recount horror as trial of

Emotions ran high yesterday as grieving parents revealed the harrowing moments they went through upon learning about the death of their toddlers, with one parent collapsing and fainting under the weight of sorrow during the trial that kicked off yesterday, with six prosecution witnesses testifying out of the 11.

BY ANTHONY WESAKA  
& JULIET KIGONGO

**S**tella Apolot, Gideon Ateku's mother (prosecution witness two).

**Justice Alice Komuhangi Khaukha:** Are you comfortable with the Luganda language?

**Apolot:** Yes, my lord.

**Judge:** Please help her take the oath.

**Apolot:** I take the oath.

**Judge:** Please speak louder so that we can all hear.

**Chief State Attorney Jonathan Muwaganya:** Repeat your name.

**Apolot:** I'm Apolot Stella

**Muwaganya:** How old?

**Apolot:** 36 years

**Muwaganya:** What do you do?

**Apolot:** I'm a businesswoman

**Muwaganya:** What business?

**Apolot:** I sell greens.

**Muwaganya:** Where do you live?

**Apolot:** Ggaba

**Muwaganya:** Where do you trade from?

**Apolot:** Ggaba Water area.

**Muwaganya:** Do you know Gideon Eteku?

**Apolot:** I used to call him my son

**Muwaganya:** How old was he?

**Apolot:** Two and a half years old.

**Muwaganya:** On April 2, where were you?

**Apolot:** I woke up that very morning, prepared him, and took him to the daycare. I left him there and went back to do my daily chores.

**Muwaganya:** Which daycare? Where is it found?

**Apolot:** She breaks down and fails to respond for a while

**Muwaganya:** We are going to ask you to be strong such that we can go through this process of court.

**Apolot:** It is found here in Ggaba

**Muwaganya:** What followed?

**Apolot:** I went back to my usual work

**Muwaganya:** What followed?

**Apolot:** It was like at 11am when a friend known as Nakimuli called me. She asked me whether I had taken my child to school. I replied yes, and she said, "Hurry to the school because there is an assailant who has entered it and killed some of the children". I lost energy, and I even failed to walk. I jumped on a boda.

When I reached the gate, there were so many people there. I just forced myself through and went straight to his classroom. Upon reaching there, I started calling him, but there was no response. I was told by a certain lady that some children had been taken to Wentz Hospital. So I started walking there, but I also failed to



People line up for security checks before attending the public court hearing in Ggaba yesterday. PHOTOS/ABUBAKER LUBOWA

walk there, and I got a boda to the medical centre.

**Muwaganya:** What did you find there at the medical centre?

**Apolot:** I entered a room that had three children, and I saw that they had covered them. I asked the doctor whether my child was alive, and the doctor replied by telling me to calm down. I insisted and asked again, but the doctor gave me the shocking news of how all were dead.

**Muwaganya:** So what followed?

**Apolot:** I lost all the energy I had. The police came and decided to take all the dead bodies to Mulago.

**Muwaganya:** Before the police came, did you get a chance to see Gideon? What state was he in?

**Apolot:** He had been stabbed and had a lot of blood. The bodies were taken to Mulago. I remained at home since I was alone and I could not follow them.

**Muwaganya:** What followed?

**Apolot:** The following day, we organised to have Gideon's body picked up from the hospital. We picked him and took the body home in Kampala and later, looked for transport to take the body to Pallisa for the burial.

**Muwaganya:** What happened in Pallisa?

**Apolot:** We prepared for burial

**Muwaganya:** When was he buried?

**Apolot:** We buried him on a Saturday

**Muwaganya:** Finally, Stella, did you happen to know the person who killed him (Gideon)?

**Apolot:** No, I just saw him in photos, but I have now seen him here today.

**Muwaganya:** Did you know the accused person before the incident?

**Apolot:** No.

**Muwaganya:** My lord, that is all for this witness. She is available for cross examination.

**Defence lawyer Sarah Awelo (Okello's lawyer):** Stella, accept our condolences. We have a few questions to ask you. At what time did you take the child to school that fateful day?

**Apolot:** I used to take him early like at 7am but that day I delayed

**Defence lawyer:** At what time did you take Gideon to school on that fateful day?

**Apolot:** At 8am

**Defence lawyer:** When you would bring the child to school, whom would you meet?

**Apolot:** Teachers used to be there.

**Defence lawyer:** When you would get the teachers there, would you enter the school with the child?

**Apolot:** Yes.

**Defence lawyer:** Were you always checked by the security?

**Apolot:** They would check bags to see which clothes were there.

**Defence lawyer:** What time did you always picked him up from school?

**Apolot:** 4pm.

**Defence lawyer:** While picking him, would you enter the school premises?

**Apolot:** Yes.

**Defence lawyer:** When entering the school, were you always checked?

**Apolot:** No.

**Defence lawyer:** You said it was your friend Nakimuli who informed you about the sad incident. What time was it?

**Apolot:** 11am.

**Defence lawyer:** Did the school ever inform you about the incident?

**Apolot:** No.

**Defence lawyer:** Did you ever find security personnel at the gate every time you would bring your child?

**Apolot:** They used to be there but this lower side.

**Defence lawyer:** So they were not on this side of the gate?

**Apolot:** I can't lie.

**Defence lawyer:** When you would come to school, would you find the security officers at the gate?

**Apolot:** They would be there.

**Defence lawyer:** Did the security officers check you?

**Apolot:** It was the teachers who used to check.

**Defence lawyer:** Once again, accept our condolences.

**Judge:** Any re-examination?

**Muwaganya:** No.

**Judge:** Stella, thank you for coming, and we condole with you on the loss of your baby.

As Apolot was leaving the witness dock, she fainted, and a team from the Red Cross and the police carried her away.

**Judge:** Can we agree that we don't take every picture?

Next witness walks in. Marvin Otim Komaketch, the father of Agenorworth Otim (Prosecution witness three)

**Judge:** What is your name?

**Witness:** Komaketch Marvin Otim, father to Agenorworth Otim.

**Judge:** How old are you?

**Otim:** I'm 32 years.

**Judge:** What is your religion?

**Otim:** I'm a Catholic.

He takes oath.

**Judge:** Mr Otim, are you comfortable speaking to court in English?

**Otim:** I prefer to use Luganda because I'm at home. (cheers from the public).

**Judge:** They will interpret for you the question he will ask, okay?

**Otim:** Okay.

**Muwaganya:** Where do you live?

**Otim:** Ggaba Water

**Muwaganya:** What do you do for a living?

**Otim:** I'm a chef.

**Muwaganya:** Do you know that man sitting down there (pointing to Okello)?

**Otim:** Yes.

**Muwaganya:** How do you know him?

**Otim:** I know him as a suspect who killed the children.

**Muwaganya:** How about the person called Keisha Agenorworth Otim?

**Otim:** I knew her very well because she was my daughter.

**Muwaganya:** How old?

**Otim:** She was going to make two years on the 28 of this month.

**Muwaganya:** So what happened on April 2?

**Otim:** I woke up early as usual and went to work. Then my supervisor came

and told me my child had died. I quickly jumped onto a boda, and I came to Ggaba.

**Muwaganya:** Did your supervisor tell you which child had died?

**Otim:** Keisha. My supervisor said he had received a phone call that my child had died. He told me that it was my wife who had called.

**Muwaganya:** What is the name of your wife?

**Otim:** Namuju Kurthum.

**Muwaganya:** So you said you jumped on a boda, which place in Ggaba did you go?

**Otim:** I went home first.

**Muwaganya:** Upon reaching home?

**Otim:** I was told they were in the hospital.

**Muwaganya:** Which hospital?

**Otim:** It's called Wentz Medical Centre.

**Muwaganya:** What followed?

**Otim:** There was a lot of security deployment, but I entered the medical centre, and I went and I saw the child.

**Muwaganya:** Where was your child?

**Otim:** She was in an emergency room

**Muwaganya:** In what state was your child?

**Otim:** Her neck had been cut, and she had died.

**Muwaganya:** What followed?

**Otim:** My mother came.

**Muwaganya:** What is the name of your mother?

**Otim:** Amono Jackie.

**Judge:** What is the name of your mother again?

**Otim:** Amono Jackie

**Muwaganya:** What happened?

**Otim:** The bodies were taken to Mulago.

**Muwaganya:** How many bodies were taken to Mulago?

**Otim:** All those killed

**Muwaganya:** Did you get to know the number?

**Otim:** Yes, they were four.

**Muwaganya:** Did you go to Mulago?

**Otim:** Yes, I went there and stayed until I was given the postmortem report.

**Muwaganya:** What followed?

**Otim:** After the postmortem, we were

APR 2  
DAY OF THE  
KILLINGS

# Trial of suspected baby killer starts

From Page 5

So around 11 am, our neighbour, Annet Ssekamate, sent her son, Sseyonga, to our home to ask us if Ignatius was at school. We said yes and she told us to hurry to the school as they had killed four children there.

My brother was stronger, dressed up quickly, and rushed to school. I was so fearful. I stayed home, but since he was not coming back, I tried calling him on the phone, but he had left it at home.

But shortly after, I saw Aloysius crying, and I knew my son could have been one of the victims. While he was returning, he was crying and calling out my son's name, and I knew he had also died.

So I told him to go back to follow up. We called them when they had reached Mulago, as they wanted some money to transport the body after it had been given to them.

I sent them money, and they returned with the body.

**Kiiza:** Who are those who returned with the body?

**Mbazira:** My brother Aloysius and the auntie? I saw it was my own child with stitches around the neck.

**Kiiza:** What followed?

**Mbazira:** I called the village, people just to confirm that the child had died, though they had heard of it in rumours.

**Kiiza:** Which village?

**Mbazira:** Namabeya in Gomba District. I told them that the burial is the following day, which was on April 3.

We slept and set off the following day, at around 8am. We buried him around 4pm.

**Kiiza:** That is all for this witness

**Defence lawyer Sarah Awelo:** Our condolences. Did the school ever tell you about the incident?

**Mbazira:** They came home

**Awelo:** After how long?

**Mbazira:** They came that very day.

**Awelo:** Did you also used to drop the child at school?

**Mbazira:** Only the mother did

**Awelo:** That is all my lord.

**Judge:** Any re-examination?

**Kiiza:** No, my lord, no re-exam.

**Judge:** Thank you for coming to give us the evidence, and thank you for being strong. Please receive and accept our sincere condolences upon the loss of your son. You can now go and sit.

**Mr Simon Okurut, the father of Ryan Odeke (5th prosecution witness)**

**Judge:** Good afternoon sir. What is your name?

**Witness:** Okurut Simon.

**Judge:** How old are you?

**Okurut:** 30 years old.

**Judge:** What is your religion?

**Okurut:** Muslim.

Takes oath.

**Anna Kiiza:** Where do you reside?

**Okurut:** Ggaba Mission.

**Kiiza:** Where is Ggaba Mission found?

**Okurut:** Near the police.

**Kiiza:** Which Division?

**Okurut:** Makindye.

**Kiiza:** What do you do for a living?

**Okurut:** Uber driver.

**Kiiza:** Do you know Odeke Ryan?

**Okurut:** I know him.

**Kiiza:** How do you know him?

**Okurut:** He is my son.

**Kiiza:** Where is Ryan?

**Okurut:** I buried him.

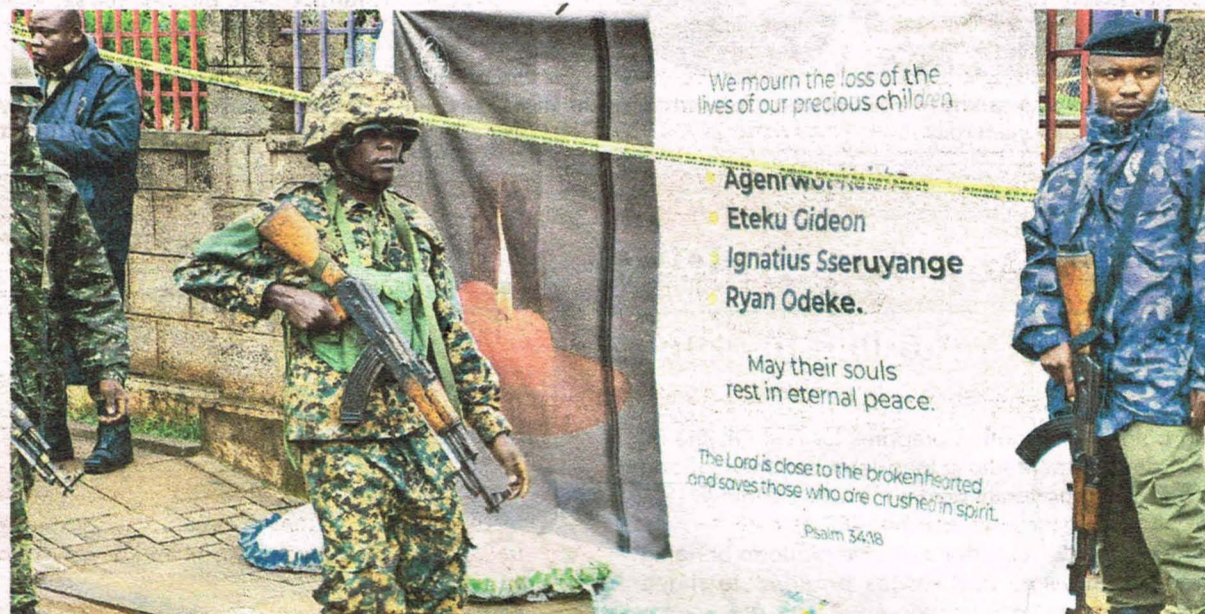
**Kiiza:** How old was Ryan?

**Okurut:** He was one year and three months.

**Kiiza:** Do you know the accused person before the court?



People follow the court session in Ggaba, Kampala yesterday. PHOTO / ABUBAKER LUBOWA



A soldier passes by a monument in honour of the murdered toddlers.

**Okurut:** Yes, I saw him on the day when he killed the children.

**Kiiza:** Which day was that?

**Okurut:** April 2.

**Kiiza:** Tell court what happened that day.

**Okurut:** I woke up very early that day, and I even woke Ryan up from sleep. I decided to drop him at the daycare in Ggaba, and I went to do my work. At around 11am, I had taken a client to Kajjansi and my wife called telling me that there is a problem at Ryan's school.

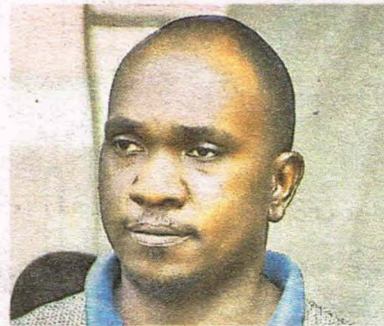
**Kiiza:** What is the name of your wife?

**Okurut:** Nakaligga Jalia.

**Kiiza:** What did she tell you?

**Okurut:** She said there was a problem, but I told her that I was far and I asked her to rush there instead. So I called her after 10 minutes, and she asked me to rush to school. I rushed to school, and I found so many people, so I decided to park up there, far from the school near Kampala University.

So I sloped down and saw my child with his neck cut. They had put the body on the verandah of the school and covered it. When I uncovered him, I found that they had cut his neck (Okurut becomes very emotional in the witness stand). I started yelling, and people who were near me comforted me. They told me that my wife had fainted and had also been rushed to Wentz Medi-



**Loss.** After the postmortem, we were given the body. My mother bought a coffin and brought her home in Ggaba.  
- Mr Marvin Komaketch Otim, father of dead child.

cal Centre. I was there for about 10 minutes, then came back to where the body was. The police had at this time put a ribbon marking it as a scene of crime.

We picked the body from Mulago and travelled to Pallisa, and reached there at around 9am on Friday, having left Kampala at around 4am. We worked on the burial programme and buried him that very day on Friday.

**Kiiza:** My lord, that is all for this witness.

**Judge:** Cross-examination?

**Kumbuga:** Sorry for what happened to your child, and I pray that something like that doesn't happen to a parent. But for purposes of justice, I ask you to respond to a number of questions.

Mr Okurut, will I be right to say that at the time of the death of your son, you were not at the school?

**Okurut:** I was not at the school.

**Kumbuga:** Will I also be right to say that you don't know the person who identified for you the suspect?

**Judge:** The question is not clear, repeat it.

**Kumbuga:** Who told you that the accused in court is responsible for the death of your child?

**Okurut:** The people who comforted me are the ones who told me that 'come and see the murderer who killed your son is on the police patrol'. (His response attracted applause from the public)

**Kumbuga:** Who told you that the accused in court is responsible for the death of your son?

**Okurut:** People told me that the killer is there on the patrol car.

**Judge:** Repeat that answer

**Okurut:** I don't know them but they said 'come and see the man who killed your child'. (Clapping from the crowd).

**Kumbuga:** Were you among those who used to take your child to school?

**Okurut:** Yes my lord.

**Kumbuga:** On the days you used to take your child to school, were you being checked by security?

**Okurut:** No, but teachers would come, get our children, pick them from our cars.

**Kumbuga:** As a parent who lost a child, did the school ever tell you what happened?

**Okurut:** Not yet.

**Kumbuga:** You said you know the accused person. How long had you known him?

**Okurut:** I knew him that very fateful day when I saw him.

**Kumbuga:** For how long?

**Okurut:** About five minutes.

**Kumbuga:** Would you be able to describe how he was dressed given that you had seen him for about five minutes?

**Okurut:** I don't remember very well, but like he was dressed in a checked shirt (attracting ululation from the public).

**Kumbuga:** My lord, I'm through with this witness.

**Kiiza:** My lord, we have no questions in re-exam for this witness.

**Judge:** Mr Okurut, thank you so much for coming and we extend our condolences to you upon the loss of your son.

**Judge:** Let's have a 30-minute break. Let's stretch and then also take some water. We return at 3:35pm. Court adjourns

## Formalising your business

## Rise of hybrid systems

## DIGITAL PAYMENTS

MARIE PATRICIA NATAKWA

Hybrid models are also emerging in trade finance. For instance, at Patasente, a platform developed by ANGELS, businesses can digitise invoices and access early payments through partner banks. While the system's core operations run on web platforms and mobile applications, suppliers without smartphones can still interact with the system through SMS notifications or basic phone interactions.

"The heavy lifting happens on the platform's backend," Bakka explains. "But the last-mile supplier may only need a basic phone."

Similar hybrid systems have been deployed elsewhere in emerging markets. In India, the Unified Payments Interface (UPI) allows users to conduct digital transactions across multiple financial institutions and devices, including feature phones, by relying on interoperable infrastructure and open application programming interfaces.

## The groundwork

Uganda has made strong progress under the National Payment Systems framework. The regulatory clarity provided by the Bank of Uganda has enabled fintech growth while safeguarding consumers.

Jabel emphasizes that accelerating this innovation requires expanding regulatory sandbox programmes, deployment of a national digital identity framework to support e-KYC and client authentication when transacting, broader e-KYC integrations, and clearer frameworks for embedded finance and hybrid delivery models.

To make rural adoption realistic, he suggests deeper partnerships. This is so as to enable telecoms to reduce USSD and data costs for financial inclusion services. Government to incentivize rural connectivity. And for solar and device providers to enable powered, affordable user, agent, and merchant devices.

"Financial inclusion is an ecosystem challenge. No single financial institution or fintech can solve it alone," Jabel adds.

For Bakka, the lesson for African fintech ecosystems lies in building shared digital platforms rather than isolated applications. "The power comes from platformisation and open APIs," he says. "Banks, telecoms and fintech companies need to operate on shared infrastructure."

Uganda's fintech future may therefore depend less on building the fastest apps and more on building the most adaptable infrastructure.

## What investors are missing in the offline fintech boom



## FINTECH

MARIE PATRICIA NATAKWA

Uganda's financial technology sector is expanding rapidly. However, much of this growth is happening in a country where reliable internet access remains far from universal.

Across Africa, fintech has emerged as one of the fastest growing sectors in the digital economy. According to the African Fintech Report, the continent hosts more than 1,200 fintech companies, up from fewer than 450 in 2020. Investment has followed the momentum, with African fintech startups attracting more than US\$1.4 billion in venture funding in 2023 alone.

Uganda is part of this expansion. According to the Financial Sector Deepening Uganda (FSD Uganda) report, the country had about 184 fintech companies by October 2024, spanning digital payments, lending platforms, insurance services and financial management tools.

The sector created more than 10,000 jobs in 2022, with projections for further growth, and now contributes around 7 percent of Uganda's Gross Domestic Product.

Yet the country's fintech success has been built less on internet-driven banking and more on mobile money infrastructure. KPMG's State of the Fintech Industry Report indicates that Uganda's mobile money ecosystem has grown rapidly. The number of transactions increased from 532.5 million in 2022 to 612.8 million in 2024. By 2025, the country had about 34.6 million active mobile money users, already exceeding the 24 million formal bank accounts. Additionally, annual mobile money transactions have also surged, reaching over Shs253.7 trillion by 2024.

But the country's digital transformation carries a paradox.

## Connectivity gap

"In most mature fintech economies, innovations are built on the presumption of affordability and connectivity, an assumption that crumbles in Uganda's digital inclusion ecosystem," says George Bakka, the chief executive officer, ANGELS. As such, hybrid or offline first models are not just design preference but rather strategic imperatives.

In Uganda's context, while fintech platforms continue to multiply, internet connectivity remains limited. Uganda's internet penetration rate stands at approximately 34.4 percent of the population, far below Kenya's 57 percent and South Africa's 83 percent. Smartphone penetration is similarly uneven, particularly in rural areas where feature phones remain dominant and network coverage can fluctuate between 2G connectivity and complete signal loss.

These constraints limit the ability of fintech products designed for constant internet access to reach large segments of the population.

## Financial utility

'The market is not asking for a purely digital experience, it's asking for a reliable financial utility that works with the tools they have.'

Mobile money and agent banking shops in Ntinda. Industry estimates show the number of mobile money and financial service agents increased from about 447,100 agents in 2022 to more than 741,400 by 2024. PHOTO/ISAAC KASAMANI

## Takeaways

- In Uganda's context, while fintech platforms continue to multiply, internet connectivity remains limited. Uganda's internet penetration rate stands at approximately 34.4 percent of the population, far below Kenya's 57 percent and South Africa's 83 percent
- According to a KPMG State of FinTech report, Uganda attracted about \$6 million in fintech investment in 2024, compared with \$367 million in South Africa, \$301 million in Kenya and \$243 million in Nigeria.

"You have a massive population with feature phones or low-end smartphones and a reliance on USSD (Un structured Supplementary Service Data).

Yet many fintech products are built for smartphone apps with constant connectivity," says Bakka.

Richard Jabel, chief executive of the Agent Banking Company (ABC), highlights the challenge further, noting, "In much of rural Uganda, internet access is inconsistent, and smartphone penetration remains low. Designing fintech solutions that assume stable data access would exclude the majority of citizens."

Additionally, Bakka reinforcing the need for hybrid systems, illustrates the vulnerabilities of internet access, noting that the periodic internet shutdowns which occur in Uganda, have the potential to bring digital platforms to a halt. For companies operating digital financial systems, the impact can be immediate.

"If we project a weekly invoice processing volume of about \$200,000 [Shs736 billion], a week-long shutdown can put that entire volume at risk," he says.

These structural barriers are also reflected in investment patterns. Uganda's fintech ecosystem still attracts far less capital than some of Africa's larger technology hubs.

According to a KPMG State of FinTech report, Uganda attracted about \$6 million in fintech investment in 2024, compared with \$367 million in South Africa, \$301 million in Kenya and \$243 million in Nigeria.

This gap has shaped how local innovators design financial technology. "The market is not asking for a purely digital experience, it's asking for a reliable financial utility that works with the tools they have," says Bakka.

As such, rather than building complex app based ecosystems that require reliable internet access, many Ugandan fintech solutions focus on low cost technologies such as USSD services, SMS alerts and physical agent networks.

Agent networks in particular have expanded rapidly. Industry estimates show the number of mobile money and financial service agents increased from about 447,100 agents in 2022 to more than 741,400 by 2024. These agents function as the physical interface between many Ugandans and the country's digital financial system.

## Rise of hybrid systems

Offline-first or hybrid fintech systems are designed to anticipate connectivity disruptions. Transactions can be initiated and stored locally on a device or within intermediary infrastructure before being synchronised with central servers once connectivity returns.

"Our model is hybrid," explains Jabel. "It includes USSD for basic transactions on feature phones, SMS confirmations, a shared agent network for cash transactions, and apps and web portals for digitally enabled users."

"This blended approach has proven far more effective than an app-only strategy in bridging the rural divide," he adds.

Hybrid fintech models are also transforming sectors such as agriculture, trade finance, insurance, and small business lending.

One such platform is EzyAgric, a Ugandan agricultural technology company attempting to digitise key parts of the farming value chain.

"We are building an end-to-end digital agriculture ecosystem that helps farmers access trusted inputs, advisory services, finance, and markets all in one place," says William Luyinda, chief executive officer and Founder, EzyAgric.

# Parents recount horror as trial of

Emotions ran high yesterday as grieving parents revealed the harrowing moments they went through upon learning about the death of their toddlers, with one parent collapsing and fainting under the weight of sorrow during the trial that kicked off yesterday, with six prosecution witnesses testifying out of the 11.

BY ANTHONY WESAKA  
& JULIET KIGONGO

**S**tella Apolot, Gideon Ateku's mother (prosecution witness two).

**Justice Alice Komuhangi Khaukha:** Are you comfortable with the Luganda language?

**Apolot:** Yes, my lord.

**Judge:** Please help her take the oath.

**Apolot:** I take the oath.

**Judge:** Please speak louder so that we can all hear.

**Chief State Attorney Jonathan Muwaganya:** Repeat your name.

**Apolot:** I'm Apolot Stella

**Muwaganya:** How old?

**Apolot:** 36 years

**Muwaganya:** What do you do?

**Apolot:** I'm a businesswoman

**Muwaganya:** What business?

**Apolot:** I sell greens.

**Muwaganya:** Where do you live?

**Apolot:** Ggaba

**Muwaganya:** Where do you trade from?

**Apolot:** Ggaba Water area.

**Muwaganya:** Do you know Gideon Eteku?

**Apolot:** I used to call him my son

**Muwaganya:** How old was he?

**Apolot:** Two and a half years old.

**Muwaganya:** On April 2, where were you?

**Apolot:** I woke up that very morning,

prepared him, and took him to the daycare. I left him there and went back to do my daily chores.

**Muwaganya:** Which daycare? Where is it found?

**Apolot:** She breaks down and fails to respond for a while

**Muwaganya:** We are going to ask you to be strong such that we can go through this process of court.

**Apolot:** It is found here in Ggaba

**Muwaganya:** What followed?

**Apolot:** I went back to my usual work

**Muwaganya:** What followed?

**Apolot:** It was like at 11am when a friend known as Nakimuli called me. She asked me whether I had taken my child to school. I replied yes, and she said, "Hurry to the school because there is an assailant who has entered it and killed some of the children". I lost energy, and I even failed to walk. I jumped on a boda.

When I reached the gate, there were so many people there. I just forced myself through and went straight to his classroom. Upon reaching there, I started calling him, but there was no response. I was told by a certain lady that some children had been taken to Wentz Hospital. So I started walking there, but I also failed to



People line up for security checks before attending the public court hearing in Ggaba yesterday. PHOTOS/ABUBAKER LUBOWA

walk there, and I got a boda to the medical centre.

**Muwaganya:** What did you find there at the medical centre?

**Apolot:** I entered a room that had three children, and I saw that they had covered them. I asked the doctor whether my child was alive, and the doctor replied by telling me to calm down. I insisted and asked again, but the doctor gave me the shocking news of how all were dead.

**Muwaganya:** So what followed?

**Apolot:** I lost all the energy I had. The police came and decided to take all the dead bodies to Mulago.

**Muwaganya:** Before the police came, did you get a chance to see Gideon? What state was he in?

**Apolot:** He had been stabbed and had a lot of blood. The bodies were taken to Mulago. I remained at home since I was alone and I could not follow them.

**Muwaganya:** What followed?

**Apolot:** The following day, we organised to have Gideon's body picked up from the hospital. We picked him and took the body home in Kampala and later, looked for transport to take the body to Pallisa for the burial.

**Muwaganya:** What happened in Pallisa?

**Apolot:** We prepared for burial

**Muwaganya:** When was he buried?

**Apolot:** We buried him on a Saturday

**Muwaganya:** Finally, Stella, did you happen to know the person who killed him (Gideon)?

**Apolot:** No, I just saw him in photos, but I have now seen him here today.

**Muwaganya:** Did you know the accused person before the incident?

**Apolot:** No.

**Muwaganya:** My lord, that is all for this witness. She is available for cross examination.

**Defence lawyer Sarah Awelo (Okello's lawyer):** Stella, accept our condolences. We have a few questions to ask you. At what time did you take the child to school that fateful day?

**Apolot:** I used to take him early like at 7am but that day I delayed

**Defence lawyer:** At what time did you take Gideon to school on that fateful day?

**Apolot:** At 8am

**Defence lawyer:** When you would bring the child to school, whom would you meet?

**Apolot:** Teachers used to be there.

**Defence lawyer:** When you would get the teachers there, would you enter the school with the child?

**Apolot:** Yes.

**Defence lawyer:** Were you always checked by the security?

**Apolot:** They would check bags to see which clothes were there.

**Defence lawyer:** What time did you always pick him up from school?

**Apolot:** 4pm.

**Defence lawyer:** While picking him, would you enter the school premises?

**Apolot:** Yes.

**Defence lawyer:** When entering the school, were you always checked?

**Apolot:** No.

**Defence lawyer:** You said it was your friend Nakimuli who informed you about the sad incident. What time was it?

**Apolot:** 11am.

**Defence lawyer:** Did the school ever inform you about the incident?

**Apolot:** No.

**Defence lawyer:** Did you ever find security personnel at the gate every time you would bring your child?

**Apolot:** They used to be there but this lower side.

**Defence lawyer:** So they were not on this side of the gate?

**Apolot:** I can't lie.

**Defence lawyer:** When you would come to school, would you find the security officers at the gate?

**Apolot:** They would be there.

**Defence lawyer:** Did the security officers check you?

**Apolot:** It was the teachers who used to check.

**Defence lawyer:** Once again, accept our condolences.

**Judge:** Any re-examination?

**Muwaganya:** No.

**Judge:** Stella, thank you for coming, and we condole with you on the loss of your baby.

As Apolot was leaving the witness dock, she fainted, and a team from the Red Cross and the police carried her away.

**Judge:** Can we agree that we don't take every picture?

Next witness walks in. Marvin Otim Komaketch, the father of Agenorworth Otim (Prosecution witness three)

**Judge:** What is your name?

**Witness:** Komaketch Marvin Otim, father to Agenorworth Otim.

**Judge:** How old are you?

**Otim:** I'm 32 years.

**Judge:** What is your religion?

**Otim:** I'm a Catholic.

He takes oath.

**Judge:** Mr Otim, are you comfortable speaking to court in English?

**Otim:** I prefer to use Luganda because I'm at home. (cheers from the public).

**Judge:** They will interpret for you the question he will ask, okay?

**Otim:** Okay.

**Muwaganya:** Where do you live?

**Otim:** Ggaba Water

**Muwaganya:** What do

you do for a living?

**Otim:** I'm a chef.

**Muwaganya:** Do you know that man sitting down there (pointing to Okello)?

**Otim:** Yes.

**Muwaganya:** How do you know him?

**Otim:** I know him as a suspect who killed the children.

**Muwaganya:** How about the person called Keisha Agenorworth Otim?

**Otim:** I knew her very well because she was my daughter.

**Muwaganya:** How old?

**Otim:** She was going to make two years on the 28 of this month.

**Muwaganya:** So what happened on April 2?

**Otim:** I woke up early as usual and went to work. Then my supervisor came

and told me my child had died. I quickly jumped onto a boda, and I came to Ggaba.

**Muwaganya:** Did your supervisor tell you which child had died?

**Otim:** Keisha. My supervisor said he had received a phone call that my child had died. He told me that it was my wife who had called.

**Muwaganya:** What is the name of your wife?

**Otim:** Namuju Kurthum.

**Muwaganya:** So you said you jumped on a boda, which place in Ggaba did you go?

**Otim:** I went home first.

**Muwaganya:** Upon reaching home?

**Otim:** I was told they were in the hospital.

**Muwaganya:** Which hospital?

**Otim:** It's called Wentz Medical Centre.

**Muwaganya:** What followed?

**Otim:** There was a lot of security deployment, but I entered the medical centre, and I went and I saw the child.

**Muwaganya:** Where was your child?

**Otim:** She was in an emergency room

**Muwaganya:** In what state was your child?

**Otim:** Her neck had been cut, and she had died.

**Muwaganya:** What followed?

**Otim:** My mother came.

**Muwaganya:** What is the name of your mother?

**Otim:** Amono Jackie.

**Judge:** What is the name of your mother again?

**Otim:** Amono Jackie

**Muwaganya:** What happened?

**Otim:** The bodies were taken to Mulago.

**Muwaganya:** How many bodies were taken to Mulago?

**Otim:** All those killed

**Muwaganya:** Did you get to know the number?

**Otim:** Yes, they were four.

**Muwaganya:** Did you go to Mulago?

**Otim:** Yes, I went there and stayed until I was given the postmortem report.

**Muwaganya:** What followed?

**Otim:** After the postmortem, we were

APR 2  
DAY OF THE  
KILLINGS

# suspected baby killer starts

given the body. My mother bought a coffin and brought her home in Ggaba.

**Muwaganya:** Where did you take her body?

**Otim:** Ggaba.

**Muwaganya:** Whose place?

**Otim:** At Jjajja's home, who is my mother.

**Muwaganya:** What followed? What happened next?

**Otim:** We made preparations to go to the village in Gulu for the burial.

**Muwaganya:** Did you go to the village?

**Otim:** Yes, we set off on Friday.

**Muwaganya:** What happened when you reached Gulu?

**Otim:** We slept, some were very tired, and the burial was the following day.

**Muwaganya:** So, when was your child buried?

**Otim:** She was buried on Saturday at midday.

**Muwaganya:** That is all for this witness. He is available for cross-examination.

**Judge:** Who is doing the cross-examination, Mr Kumbuga?

**Defence lawyer Richard Kumbuga:** Mr Komakech, I'm a lawyer, and I wish to ask you some questions. So, would I be right to say that you were told your child was dead?

**Otim:** I told you because I was called while at my workplace. At my workplace, we are not allowed to use our phones.

**Kumbuga:** Were you told who had killed her?

**Otim:** No.

**Kumbuga:** So, will I be right to say this



Red Cross officials attend to a parent who collapsed during the High Court session in Ggaba yesterday.

is the first day you are seeing him today?

**Otim:** No, because I saw him that fateful day when I jumped on a boda.

**Kumbuga:** So there was no security as you dropped the children at the gate?

**Otim:** No, it's the teachers who would receive the children, though on that day, it wasn't me who dropped the child off at school.

**Tragic.**  
So I sloped down and got my child with a cut neck. They had put the body on the verandah of the school and covered it. When I uncovered him, I found that they had cut his

neck.  
- Mr Simon Okurut, witness

**Kumbuga:** So there was no security?

**Otim:** No security.

**Kumbuga:** Since there were many people around that day you were not able to see the accused?

**Otim:** I saw him, though I didn't know she had been killed from there. When I was at the hospital, I heard people saying Okello had killed the babies.

**Kumbuga:** Did you see the accused at the hospital?

**Otim:** I didn't see him.

**Kumbuga:** At the time you saw that person while on a boda, [had he been arrested]?

**Otim:** He was on a police patrol car.

**Kumbuga:** Would I be correct to say that since you were on a boda, you didn't

have sufficient time to observe the accused?

**Otim:** I was going home on a boda, but when I reached the hospital, I saw him on social media.

**Kumbuga:** Do you remember how he was dressed?

**Otim:** I don't remember.

**Muwaganya:** You said on that fateful day, it wasn't you who brought the child to school?

**Otim:** Yes, it was my neighbour, called Derrick.

**Muwaganya:** So, who always dropped the child off at school?

**Otim:** Sometimes it was me, and sometimes her mother.

**Judge:** Our sincere condolences, and thank you for coming.

Lawrence Mbazira, father of Ignatius Sseruyange

**Judge:** How old are you?

**Mbazira:** 40 years old.

Takes oath

**Anna Kiiza:** Where do you stay?

**Mbazira:** Ggaba Water

**Anna Kiiza:** What do you do?

**Mbazira:** Carpenter.

**Kiiza:** Where is Sseruyange?

**Mbazira:** He is deceased.

**Kiiza:** What happened that day?

**Mbazira:** At around 7am, the mother, Namiyingo Beth, bathed him, dressed him in sportswear and then took him to school. It's called Ggaba Early Childhood Development Centre.

While they were leaving, the child said bye to me. The child complained of how I had not responded to his bye, but I told him that I had. And I said bye loudly this time around.

Continues on Page 6

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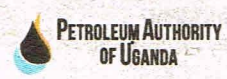
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# Trial of suspected baby killer starts

From Page 5

So around 11 am, our neighbour, Annet Ssekamate, sent her son, Sseyonga, to our home to ask us if Ignatius was at school. We said yes and she told us to hurry to the school as they had killed four children there.

My brother was stronger, dressed up quickly, and rushed to school. I was so fearful. I stayed home, but since he was not coming back, I tried calling him on the phone, but he had left it at home.

But shortly after, I saw Aloysius crying, and I knew my son could have been one of the victims. While he was returning, he was crying and calling out my son's name, and I knew he had also died.

So I told him to go back to follow up. We called them when they had reached Mulago, as they wanted some money to transport the body after it had been given to them.

I sent them money, and they returned with the body.

**Kiiza:** Who are those who returned with the body?

**Mbazira:** My brother Aloysius and the auntie? I saw it was my own child with stitches around the neck.

**Kiiza:** What followed?

**Mbazira:** I called the village people just to confirm that the child had died, though they had heard of it in rumours.

**Kiiza:** Which village?

**Mbazira:** Namabeza in Gomba District. I told them that the burial is the following day, which was on April 3.

We slept and set off the following day at around 8am. We buried him around 4pm.

**Kiiza:** That is all for this witness **Defence lawyer Sarah Awelo:** Our condolences. Did the school ever tell you about the incident?

**Mbazira:** They came home

**Awelo:** After how long?

**Mbazira:** They came that very day.

**Awelo:** Did you also used to drop the child at school?

**Mbazira:** Only the mother did

**Awelo:** That is all my lord.

**Judge:** Any re-examination?

**Kiiza:** No, my lord, no re-exam.

**Judge:** Thank you for coming to give us the evidence, and thank you for being strong. Please receive and accept our sincere condolences upon the loss of your son. You can now go and sit.

**Mr Simon Okurut, the father of Ryan Odeke (5th prosecution witness)**

**Judge:** Good afternoon sir. What is your name?

**Witness:** Okurut Simon.

**Judge:** How old are you?

**Okurut:** 30 years old.

**Judge:** What is your religion?

**Okurut:** Muslim.

Takes oath.

**Anna Kiiza:** Where do you reside?

**Okurut:** Ggaba Mission.

**Kiiza:** Where is Ggaba Mission found?

**Okurut:** Near the police.

**Kiiza:** Which Division?

**Okurut:** Makindye.

**Kiiza:** What do you do for a living?

**Okurut:** Uber driver.

**Kiiza:** Do you know Odeke Ryan?

**Okurut:** I know him.

**Kiiza:** How do you know him?

**Okurut:** He is my son.

**Kiiza:** Where is Ryan?

**Okurut:** I buried him.

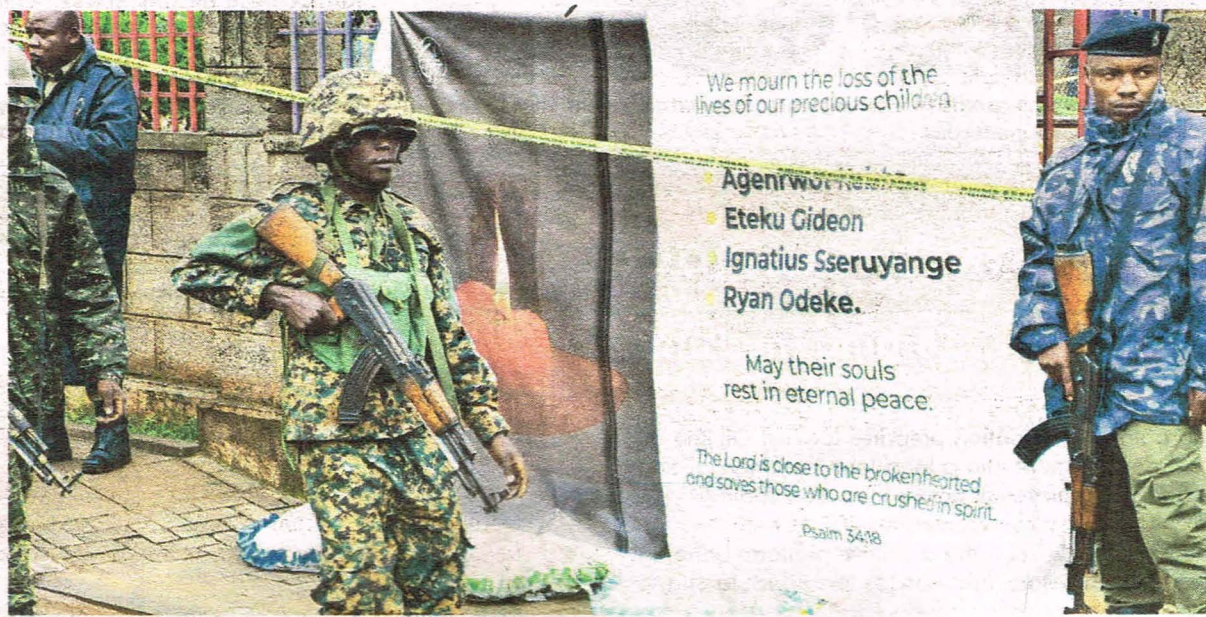
**Kiiza:** How old was Ryan?

**Okurut:** He was one year and three months.

**Kiiza:** Do you know the accused person before the court?



People follow the court session in Ggaba, Kampala yesterday. PHOTO / ABUBAKER LUBOWA



A soldier passes by a monument in honour of the murdered toddlers.

**Okurut:** Yes, I saw him on the day when he killed the children.

**Kiiza:** Which day was that?

**Okurut:** April 2.

**Kiiza:** Tell court what happened that day.

**Okurut:** I woke up very early that day, and I even woke Ryan up from sleep. I decided to drop him at the daycare in Ggaba, and I went to do my work. At around 11am, I had taken a client to Kajjansi and my wife called telling me that there is a problem at Ryan's school.

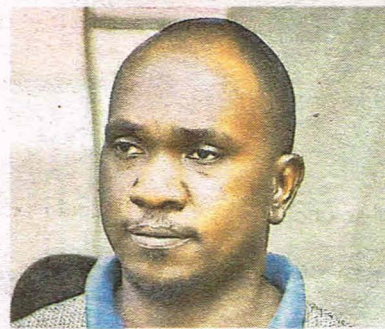
**Kiiza:** What is the name of your wife?

**Okurut:** Nakaligga Jalia.

**Kiiza:** What did she tell you?

**Okurut:** She said there was a problem, but I told her that I was far and I asked her to rush there instead. So I called her after 10 minutes, and she asked me to rush to school. I rushed to school, and I found so many people, so I decided to park up there, far from the school near Kampala University.

So I sloped down and saw my child with his neck cut. They had put the body on the verandah of the school and covered it. When I uncovered him, I found that they had cut his neck (Okurut becomes very emotional in the witness stand). I started yelling, and people who were near me comforted me. They told me that my wife had fainted and had also been rushed to Wentz Medi-



**Loss.** After the postmortem, we were given the body. My mother bought a coffin and brought her home in Ggaba. - Mr Marvin Koma-maketch Otim, father of dead child.

cal Centre. I was there for about 10 minutes, then came back to where the body was. The police had at this time put a ribbon marking it as a scene of crime.

We picked the body from Mulago and travelled to Pallisa, and reached there at around 9am on Friday, having left Kampala at around 4am. We worked on the burial programme and buried him that very day on Friday.

**Kiiza:** My lord, that is all for this witness.

**Judge:** Cross-examination?

**Kumbuga:** Sorry for what happened to your child, and I pray that something like that doesn't happen to a parent. But for purposes of justice, I ask you to respond to a number of questions.

Mr Okurut, will I be right to say that at the time of the death of your son, you were not at the school?

**Okurut:** I was not at the school.

**Kumbuga:** Will I also be right to say that you don't know the person who identified for you the suspect?

**Judge:** The question is not clear, repeat it.

**Kumbuga:** Who told you that the accused in court is responsible for the death of your child?

**Okurut:** The people who comforted me are the ones who told me that 'come and see the murderer who killed your son is on the police patrol. (His response attracted applause from the public)

**Kumbuga:** Who told you that the accused in court is responsible for the death of your son?

**Okurut:** People told me that the killer is there on the patrol car.

**Judge:** Repeat that answer

**Okurut:** I don't know them but they said 'come and see the man who killed your child'. (Clapping from the crowd).

**Kumbuga:** Were you among those who used to take your child to school?

**Okurut:** Yes my lord.

**Kumbuga:** On the days you used to take your child to school, were you being checked by security?

**Okurut:** No, but teachers would come, get our children, pick them from our cars.

**Kumbuga:** As a parent who lost a child, did the school ever tell you what happened?

**Okurut:** Not yet.

**Kumbuga:** You said you know the accused person. How long had you known him?

**Okurut:** I knew him that very fateful day when I saw him.

**Kumbuga:** For how long?

**Okurut:** About five minutes.

**Kumbuga:** Would you be able to describe how he was dressed given that you had seen him for about five minutes?

**Okurut:** I don't remember very well, but like he was dressed in a checked shirt (attracting ululation from the public).

**Kumbuga:** My lord, I'm through with this witness.

**Kiiza:** My lord, we have no questions in re-exam for this witness.

**Judge:** Mr Okurut, thank you so much for coming and we extend our condolences to you upon the loss of your son.

**Judge:** Let's have a 30-minute break. Let's stretch and then also take some water. We return at 3:35pm. Court adjourns

The sub-region is blessed with a combination of natural undulating mountainous wonders, rich cultural heritage, and a gateway to neighbouring DR Congo and South Sudan.

BY FELIX WAROM OKELLO

For years, the West Nile Sub-region's tourism potential has remained largely untapped, dwarfed by the well-trodden safari circuits of the western region and the white-water rafting capital of Jinja in eastern Uganda.

Yet, West Nile possesses a unique and compelling tourism portfolio that, if strategically developed, could transform it into one of Uganda's most sought-after destinations.

Opportunities range from water sports on the River Nile, mountain hiking, off-road biking and cycling up the hills of Metu in Moyo District.

The sub-region is blessed with a combination of natural undulating mountainous wonders, rich cultural heritage, and a strategic location that positions it as a gateway to two neighbouring countries — the Democratic Republic of Congo, and South Sudan.

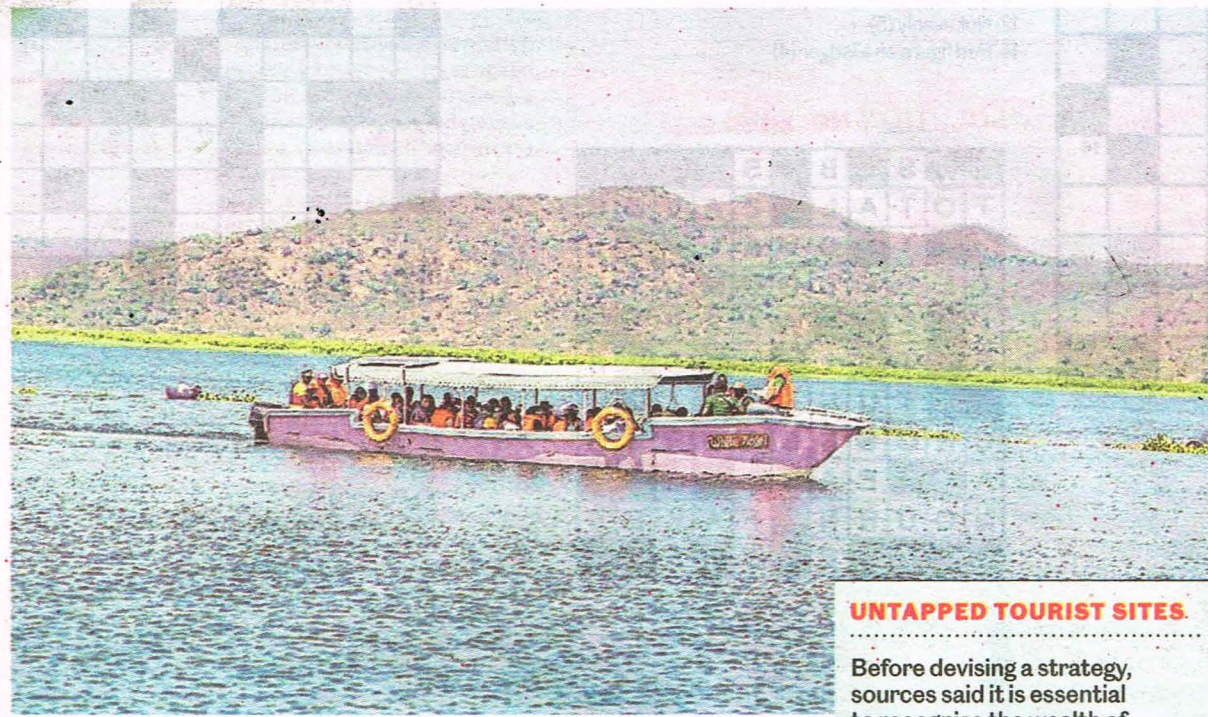
Sources said to tap into the tourism revenue, stakeholders, from local governments to private investors and community leaders, must move beyond a fragmented approach and embrace a cohesive, region-wide strategy centred on infrastructure, product development, marketing, and cross-border integration, among others.

"We know about some of the sites, but most of them are idle. They are in a poor state without any improvement. I think government is unwilling to assist the local governments to revive these sites," Mr Luiji Ondóma, a resident of Maracha, told *Daily Monitor* at the weekend.

"Even the Miriadia Falls in our district, are not generating income for the people and local government. A few people struggled to discover and utilise this site, but not much money is generated from it," he added.

For instance, Mr Joseph Opio, a resident of Nyapea Sub-county in Zombo District, said at the weekend: "There is a need to prioritise infrastructure and private investment in accommodation. I only saw good hotels in Arua City and not in Zombo or Nebbi or Pakwach or even in Koboko. The international tourists have their standards. So, private de-

## How West Nile can tap into tourism windfall



Tourists enjoy a boat ride on River Nile in Adjumani District. PHOTO/ MARKO TAIBOT

velopers should be supported to construct modern lodges."

The Nile also creates a natural border with South Sudan and the DRC, adding a geopolitical intrigue that can be packaged into adventure tourism.

### Shs 4.8 trillion

The amount Uganda earned from the tourism sector in 2024, according to the Tourism ministry.

Arua City Mayor Sam Wadri Nyakua emphasised the importance of tourism in promoting local content. He urged the visitors to spend locally by buying local products like honey, onang-onang, *kitenge*, among others.

During the World Tourism Day national celebrations in Arua City last September, Mr Nyakua reminded President Museveni on the pledge to construct a museum in Giligili.

Arua Central Division MP Jackson Atima said: "We need the roads linking the sites to be worked upon in

order to promote tourism to harness revenue and livelihood. There is a need for the establishment of a tourism information centre and regional museum."

Dr Jimmy Opigo, a tourism expert, developer and entrepreneur in West Nile, organises boat cruises on the Nile.

"We have always talked of West Nile tourism and people have wondered what is there and how we exactly start or spark action. And we start with 'RaceTheNile' 800 kilometres, which is coming up from November 23-28, international cycling race poised to rival the TourDeFrance and TourDeRwanda," he said.

Explaining why this race is important for West Nile in tourism, Dr Opigo, said: "This race is special because it is the only race where most of its part is along the mighty River Nile, along two countries' borders; DRC and South Sudan, which passes the foot of Mount Otce, crosses the Nile twice by vintage ferry and canoes, rides through refugee camps and most importantly through Ajai Game Reserve."

"Remember, West Nile has Alur, Jonam, Lugbara, Kakwa, Reli, Gimara, Aliba, Nubian, Aringa, Madi, Kebu, Ledu,

### UNTAPPED TOURIST SITES

Before devising a strategy, sources said it is essential to recognise the wealth of attractions that West Nile already possesses.

First, the hidden treasures of Mount Kei in Yumbe, Mt Otce-1,600 metres above sea level with about 160 bird species in Moyo and Mount Wati in Terego districts are the facets to promotion of tourism. These rise vividly from the savannah plains, offering not only spectacular panoramic views but also world-class rock climbing opportunities.

Unlike the more commercialised climbing destinations elsewhere, these mountains provide an authentic, rugged adventure experience. The surrounding landscape is also home to large populations of diverse bird species, other animal species, making them ideal for ecotourism and bird watching.

Congolese and several South Sudanese refugees whose cultures have formed a melting point for foods, music and dance, especially Congolese Lingala Rumba and Arab influenced tasty foods," he added.

Despite these assets, West Nile's tourism sector remains nascent. The prima-

ry barrier has been infrastructure.

While the main roads from Pakwach to Oraba have been tarmacked, the feeder roads leading to key attractions like Mount Kei, the Miradia Falls, the Audi Caves, Mt Otce in Moyo, the Alikua Pyramid in Maracha, the burial site for Nyipir in Nebbi District, the hot spring in Panyimur in Pakwach District, and other remote cultural sites remain in poor condition.

Also, tour operators often cite a lack of standard accommodation as the single biggest reason they do not include West Nile in their itineraries.

However, local investors in Adjumani have recently constructed both mid-range and high end lodges that are comfortable for the tourists.

They also said the sub-region is still erroneously associated with instability—a hangover from the days of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) insurgency and former president Idi Amin's 'syndrome'.

Obongi MP Hassan Kaps Fungaroo, has for the past six years been advocating for the construction of a museum in honour of President Amin, but the plans have been thwarted.

"This museum will be a learning and research centre, and could attract tourists once it is well-stocked with different artefacts. Why should West Nile continue to suffer because of some of the things which were done during Idi Amin's era? We should fight this negativity because we need to move on with developments," Mr Fungaroo said.

Sources said West Nile must adopt a multi-pronged strategy to address challenges and attract tourists.

### Government's response

The Minister of Tourism Wildlife and Antiquities, Col (rtd) Tom Butime, concurred on the need for development because there is loss of revenue from the idle sites in the sub-region.

"West Nile is ripe for tourism because of the strategic location with the transformation that is improving and you must embrace tourism because it talks about the community. You cannot talk about tourists and the community do not benefit," he said.

Mr Butime added: "It is a sector that touches communities, that keeps transport running, that brings tourists to the hotels, which will make a cup of milk to find a market, potatoes to be bought, people will be employed. Once the sites are revived, the tourists will come."

Given West Nile's position as a gateway, there is immense potential for border tourism. Simplifying visa processes for tourists entering from South Sudan and the DRC, and creating one-stop border posts that cater specifically to travellers, could, among others, encourage more cross-border tourism circuits.

BY SUSAN ACHOLA

**AGAGO.** Classes have been suspended at Kotomor Seed Secondary School in Agago District following a protest by teachers that broke out last Thursday over a failure by the government to pay their salaries since September 2025.

Sources told *Daily Monitor* that last Wednesday 25 teachers stormed the office of the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) over the matter.

They were, however, calmed by Mr Patrick Olila, the CAO, and Ms Susan Akot Moro, the deputy Resident District Commissioner, who held meetings with them to address the matter.

One of the teachers, who spoke to this publication on condition of anonymity, said they would only return to class af-

## Agago teachers give govt 10 days to clear salary arrears

ter the salary arrears are cleared.

"Our plight as staff who were recruited to serve at Kotomor Seed SS and assumed duty since September 12, 2025 and have now gone seven months without receiving salaries... we cannot continue teaching while no one wants to listen to us," he said.

The teacher noted that the district has only processed the documents of two teachers to be enrolled on government payroll.

"Despite diligently carrying out our professional duties, the prolonged delay in payment has placed us under severe financial strain, making it ex-

tremely difficult for us to meet basic needs such as accommodation, food, transport, and supporting our families."

In a March 11 letter, the disgruntled teachers issued a 10-day ultimatum for the district to address the matter.

"We call upon your office to urgently intervene and ensure immediate action is taken to process and pay all outstanding salaries owed to the affected staff and a clear explanation is provided regarding the cause of the seven months delay in salary payment," the letter reads.

It adds: "...this step is not intended to disrupt the education of learners but

rather to seek justice and fairness for staff who have faithfully continued to serve despite months of unpaid work."

In an interview, Mr Olila said he has forwarded the matter to the Ministry of Public Service.

"As of this month [April] the affected teachers will start receiving their salaries because their names are already on the payroll... we have already rectified the situation. The delay was caused because there was no money, the ministry has now secured it," Mr Olila explained.

Kotomor Seed SS has 28 teachers, with only three of them, including the head teacher, able to access the government

pay roll.

"We are going to inform them that we are not going to call off the industrial action until they make payment," one of the disgruntled teachers said.

He explained that the affected teachers submitted documents, among other requirements, as stipulated by the public service standing orders.

"But now we have taken seven months without successfully accessing our pay. We cannot afford life outside now, we cannot afford to transport ourselves to the school, because there is no accommodation for staff there," the teacher said.

## QUOTE OF THE DAY

## Uganda Law Society president Isaac Ssemakadde on mobile court for Ggaba killings trial:

"This...is judicial lynching dressed as public participation. A trial conducted at the scene of a crime, under political pressure and public outrage, cannot meet the standards of an independent and impartial hearing."



## EDITORIAL

## Together, we can end the HIV/Aids scourge

Thousands of people on Sunday participated in the 13th Kabaka Birthday Run. The event, which is held in major urban centres across the country annually, is aimed at sensitising the populace about the HIV/Aids pandemic and securing funds to combat the scourge.

The event that commemorates the birthday of the king of Buganda, Kabaka Ronald Mutebi II, is organised by the Buganda Kingdom in conjunction with government agencies, private sector organisations, business entities, and the general public.

Proceeds from the event have, over the years, contributed tremendously towards efforts to fight HIV/Aids, a major health challenge that has claimed thousands of lives. Great strides have been made ever since the war against the HIV/Aids scourge was launched in 1986. This progress is in a large part due to the government's sustained effort to educate people about the pandemic in order to reduce its spread.

In this life-saving goal, the government has, over the years, received support from its development partners, non-governmental organisations, religious organisations, business entities, and cultural organisations.

## The issue:

HIV/Aids fight

## Our view:

With the foreign funding greatly reduced, the onus is on the Government of Uganda to find other sources of revenue locally to maintain the fight against HIV/Aids.

According to the Uganda Aids Commission, annual Aids-related deaths reduced from 56,000 in 2010 to 20,000 in 2024. There was a fall in new HIV infections from 96,000 to 37,000 over the same period.

Impressive headway has also been made in increasing the number of people enrolled onto antiretroviral treatment.

However, the fight against HIV/Aids has been heavily reliant on foreign funding, largely from the United States government.

This key revenue source was abruptly disrupted following the United States government's reduction in the amount of money allocated to Uganda to fight HIV/Aids.

This has disrupted Uganda's war against HIV/Aids, including the provision of antiretroviral treatment to 1.4 million citizens living with the virus.

With the foreign funding greatly reduced, the onus is on the Government of Uganda to find other sources of revenue locally to maintain the fight against HIV/Aids. The Buganda Kingdom initiative is playing a key role in filling the financial gap that the government is currently struggling to close.

We commend Kabaka Mutebi II, the Buganda Kingdom, and its partners, and the general public for taking part in the Kabaka Birthday Run, an event that provides much-needed funds for the anti-HIV/Aids fight.

Other cultural institutions, religious organisations, and non-governmental organisations should emulate the Buganda Kingdom and organise fundraising events to secure funds for the war against HIV/Aids.

We also call upon business entities to consider the anti-HIV/Aids fight as a key corporate social responsibility and donate generously towards the cause.

To the public, we say every individual should take responsibility for his or her health. Do not engage in risky behaviour that can expose you to HIV/Aids.

Those who are already infected should seek treatment and live positively. Do not intentionally infect other people with the virus.

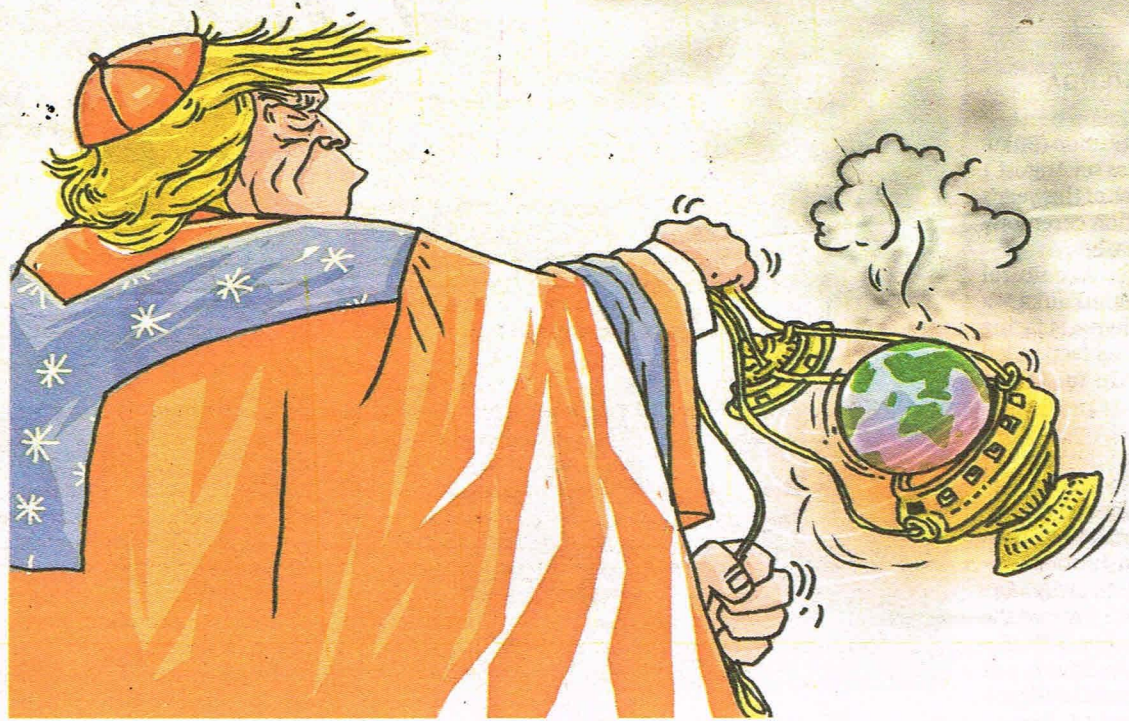
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**Cartoon.** Pope Leo has said he has no fear of the Trump administration and will continue to speak out against war.



## Law vs humanity: Justice, mercy, and the insanity defence

Justice must wear two robes: one of law and one of humanity. This paradox lies at the heart of the insanity defence in criminal law. It forces us to ask whether justice should be blind to mercy or whether it must embrace both the strictness of the law and the compassion of human understanding.

The Uganda's Penal Code Act, Cap. 128 provides the legal foundation for this doctrine. Section 11 states that a person is not criminally responsible if, at the time of the act, they were suffering from a "disease of the mind" that rendered them incapable of understanding what they were doing or of knowing that it was wrong. This principle, rooted in the historic M'Naghten Rules of 1843, reflects the foundation of criminal law: liability requires both the act itself (actus reus) and the guilty mind (mens rea). Without intent, punishment loses its moral justification. The law presumes sanity, but allows this presumption to be rebutted by credible psychiatric evidence. Courts rely on expert testimony, cross-examination, and judicial oversight to ensure the defence is not abused. Defendants found not guilty by reason of insanity are not "set free" but are confined to psychiatric institutions, often for indeterminate periods, with release contingent on medical clearance and judicial approval.

Yet the law's clarity often collides with public outrage. When heinous crimes occur, such as the Ggaba murder of four toddlers, society instinctively demands retribution. Communities expect justice to be visible, proportionate, and firm.

To many, the insanity defence appears as a loophole. Public outrage reflects a retributive instinct, echoing the ancient cry of *lex talionis*: "An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth" (Exodus 21:24). Families of victims of

True justice is neither blind to mercy nor deaf to the cries of victims, it is a balance that sustains the moral fabric of society.

## Alleluah Orishaba Justice



ten feel justice has not been served when insanity is invoked. The tension between legal principle and public emotion is, therefore, profound.

From the mental health perspective, psychiatry views insanity not as moral failure but as illness. In such cases, treatment rather than punishment becomes the appropriate response.

Human rights principles provide a bridge between law and public sentiment. Uganda's Constitution enshrines fundamental rights: Article 28 guarantees the right to a fair hearing, while Article 24 prohibits torture, cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment. International conventions such as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights reinforce these protections. Even those accused of heinous crimes retain their humanity. Justice must, therefore, balance accountability with protection of rights. The insanity defence embodies this balance. It ensures punishment is reserved for those who act with rational intent, while those whose minds are impaired are treated in ways that respect their dignity and protect society.

Christian ethics provide a moral compass in this debate. Scripture teaches: "What does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God" (Micah 6:8). Justice without mercy becomes cruelty; mercy without justice becomes weakness. The insanity defence embodies this balance, it does not excuse wrongdoing but recognises that punishment must be morally justified. Societal norms, however, often lean toward retribution.

The Ggaba case is more than a trial; it is a mirror reflecting Uganda's struggle to reconcile law, morality, and public sentiment. Courts will rely on psychiatric evaluations, judicial oversight, and the safeguards of law to ensure the insanity defence is not abused. But the public will continue to demand answers, and perhaps even reforms. Justice must prevail not as vengeance alone, nor as unchecked compassion, but as a balance of accountability and humanity. The Penal Code Act, Cap. 128, insists that true justice cannot ignore the mind. The public insists that true justice cannot ignore the victims. Between these two truths lies the hardest path of all: a justice that embraces both law and humanity.

The insanity defence in Uganda is not about excusing crime but about ensuring justice remains morally justified. The Ggaba tragedy has reignited debate, but the law must remain firm: punishment requires intent, and where intent is absent due to mental illness, treatment and confinement are the just response. Uganda must decide whether justice will be blind to mercy or whether it will embrace both law and humanity. The answer will define not only the outcome of one case but the moral compass of a nation.

True justice is neither blind to mercy nor deaf to the cries of victims, it is a balance that sustains the moral fabric of society.

Ms Alleluah Orishaba, Kalikumutima & Co. Advocates