

# Sensitise youths on sports betting

In our story, "Shs1,000 to Shs5m: How sports betting fuels hope, despair among youth", published on our website on Thursday, April 30, we highlight how some Ugandans have turned to sports betting into a way of dealing with financial gaps created by unemployment.

Some of the people interviewed for the story testify to how they have made money off placing bets of as little as Shs1,000 and winning as much as Shs5 million, and how they have gone ahead to use the money to pay bills such as school fees and medical bills, take care of their families, and even start businesses. While this sounds rosy, it is only the glossy side of the story. It is common knowledge that not everyone who participates in sports betting has a good story to tell.

Anything, even if it seems to be income-generating, that can turn into an addiction and affect mental health should be approached with care. Cases of students diverting school fees that their parents worked so hard for to sports betting and then losing all of it abound. Stories of addiction to betting are also real, with the victims failing to control the time and amount spent on sports betting, forfeiting other duties and activities, channelling funds meant for school, business, etc., to betting, not to mention the mental distress caused by the false hope that is, in most cases, compounded over time.

## The issue:

Sports betting

## Our view:

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Stories of young, able-bodied people shunning honest work in favour of quick cash from betting have also been told. Therefore, while sports betting might be for some a great recreational and entertaining practice, the downside to it must always be told. It has been said before and must be repeated, especially for young people, that sports betting can't and shouldn't be viewed as a source of livelihood.

Ms Jackline Kamakune, the senior communications officer at the National Lotteries and Gaming Regulatory Board, the body that regulates gaming in Uganda, says that despite providing jobs to Ugandans, sports betting is a game of chance and strictly a form of entertainment, that should not be seen as a source of income or a money-making venture.

Sports betting must stay regulated with guidelines seen to be followed by all stakeholders. And now that the gaming industry is diverse with growing digital forums, restrictions and guidelines must be seen to be in tandem with the developments and innovations, and disruptions.

They must adapt to the changes in the sector if they are to maintain the safeguards. While the gaming sector itself is quite lucrative even in terms of revenue for the government, regulations must be relevant, effective, and implemented. For context, the government, in 2024/2025, collected Shs323b in revenue from the gaming sector. Despite the impressive money being made, we must watch out for our young people.

The World Health Organisation names those at risk of gambling addiction and, in this case, betting as people experiencing significant life events, including separation, retirement, injury, or the death of a loved one, may be at increased risk.

The WHO also says social stressors such as poverty, discrimination, or other disadvantages also increase risks. We must therefore continue to guide and sensitise our young people on sports betting.