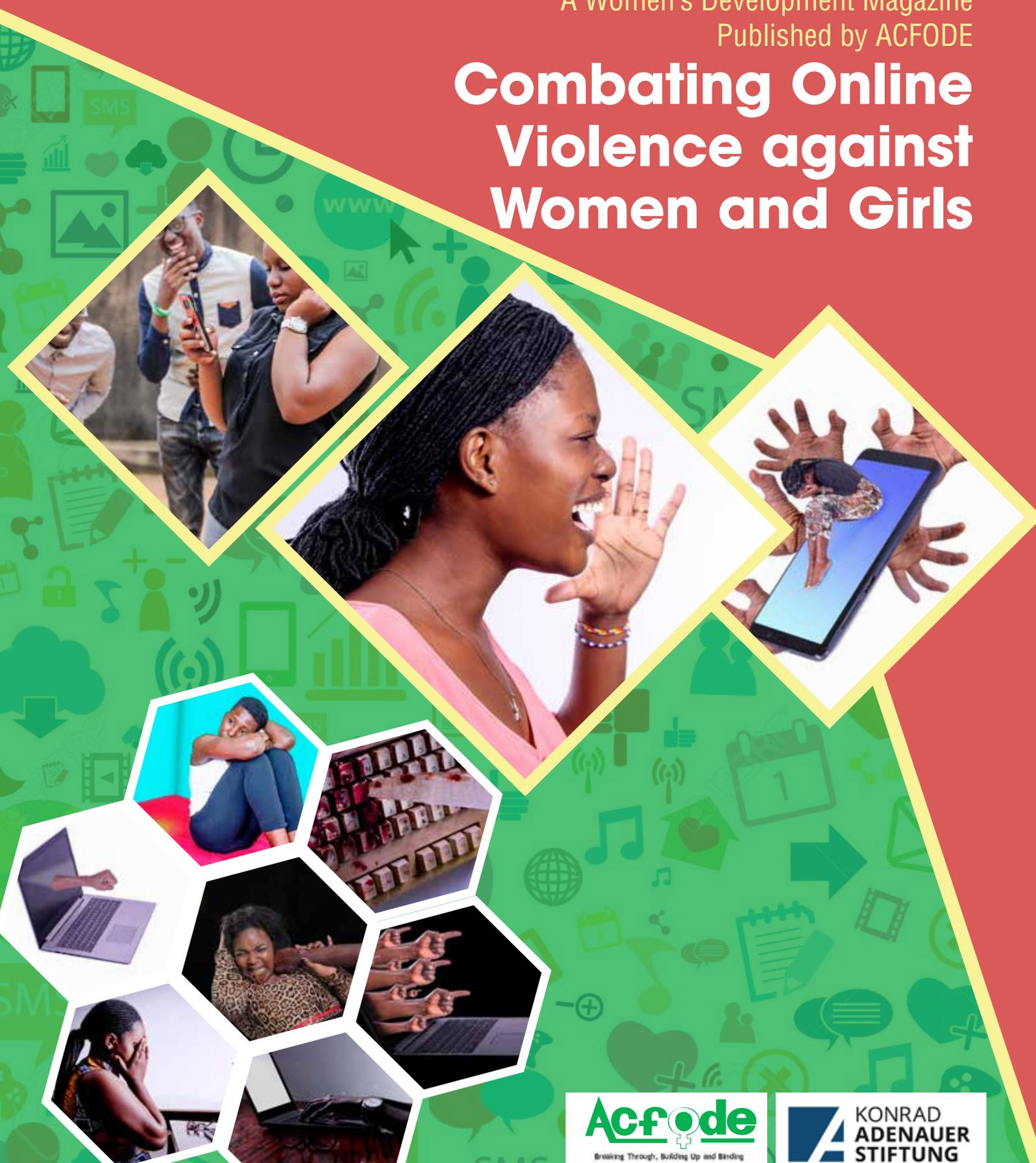


Issue 67 November 2019

Arise

A Women's Development Magazine
Published by ACFODE

Combating Online Violence against Women and Girls





*If you put up
pics on FB,
of course they'll
get morphed.*



**She came out on
Facebook.
Obviously, she
was asking for
the trolls.**



**Why did you give
your boyfriend
your email
password? You
asked for it.**



*I don't feel sorry for
her. The slut shared
nudes on Whatsapp.*

“

**Online Violence:
Just Because It's
Virtual Doesn't
Make It Any Less
Real**

Clare Winterton, Contributor Huffington Post

Vision

A just society where gender equality is a reality



**OUR
VISION**

Mission

To empower women and influence legislation and policy for gender equality in Uganda



**OUR
MISSION**



**CORPORATE
VALUES**

Core Purpose

Advocacy for gender equality and equity

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“

Violence against women is perhaps the most **shameful human rights violation**, and it is perhaps the most pervasive. It knows no boundaries of geography, culture or wealth. As long as it continues, we cannot claim to be making real progress towards **equality development and peace.**”

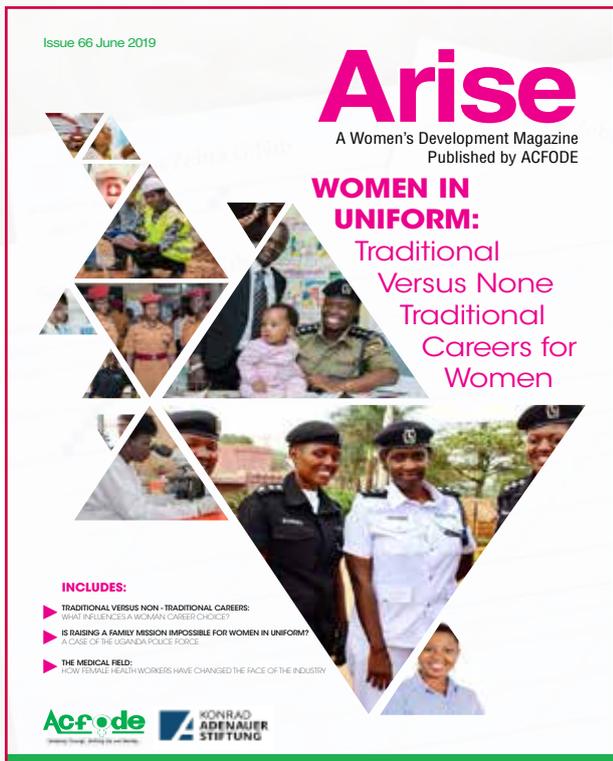
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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



I appreciate ACFODE for having dedicated issue 66 of the Arise Magazine to women in Uniform. Bringing to light our challenges and experiences will go a long way in wearing down of stereotypes and changing negative perceptions that we battle with every day.

Sarah Chesang
Mukono Police Station

Reading ISSUE 66 of the Arise Magazine made me appreciate women in STEM and law enforcement careers because of the pressures and criticism they face, unlike their male counterparts. This calls for more support from government and other key stakeholders.

Andysen Agaba
Monitor Publications

Thank you ACFODE for this issue. Despite being one of the women in uniform, I didn't relate well to some of the issues that affect my peers. This could be because of my position. However, by reading this issue, I learnt a lot from the different topics that were featured in the magazine. I therefore intend to use my influence to advocate for better working conditions for female prison officers.

Nafuka Elizabeth
Commissioner – Rehabilitation and Reintegration
Uganda Prisons

calligraphy pad

FROM THE EDITOR



Sandra Nassali
Editor In Chief
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During the decades it has been in use, the internet has been both a blessing and a curse. A number of examples will suffice. The internet has broadened our horizons by opening doors to the kinds of knowledge that would have been very difficult, if not impossible, for us to have access to before its advent. It has strengthened our hands in terms of our awareness about legislation, both national and supranational, that relates to our rights. It has given us voice, so we now can speak freely from outside the barriers of the traditional media. Using the internet, one can tackle issues that affect women. Women

can also get empowered through seeking out important information, for example about markets for their products, or through leveraging the internet as a tool to alert society to incidents of girls and women's rights violations.

However, the internet has its downside, too. It has created opportunities for the commission of a host of vices, including, among others, cyber bullying, cyber stalking and hacking. There have been incidents where girls' and women's privacy has been violated for instance via the internet, mostly through the posting of their nude images online. This has affected not only celebrities and other well-known women but also others whom few people wouldn't have heard about if they had not been victims of online violation of girls' and women's rights. Women have also been stalked and abused in other forms on the internet.

However, the existence of laws such as the Computer Misuse Act and the Ant-Pornography Act has not afforded the kind of robust protection that the women expect. This is because of the complexity of the laws, which do not lend themselves to easy interpretation, on one hand and on another because of flippancy, and sometimes ignorance – on the part of the police. Society is also complicit, frequently blaming the female victims of cybercrime instead of calling the perpetrators to account. There is also the element of patriarchy, which makes it difficult for women to navigate some of the online spaces without fear of a backlash.

However, not all is lost. The progress that has so far been made can be built on to make further headway. The long-term goal, which is to make cyberspace safe for everyone, can be achieved by sensitising society to the need for girls and women's online security and by involving all the stakeholders in the quest for this security.

Enjoy the read!



THE INTERNET AND ITS ROLE IN ADVANCING WOMEN AND GIRLS' RIGHTS

Ntensibe Edgar Michael

The GlobalStats desk at Statcounter has it that as of May 2019, Facebook commanded 64.5% of its use in Uganda, Pinterest came in second with 20.64%, Twitter third with 9.62%, YouTube fourth with 3.62%, Instagram fifth with 1.17% and in sixth position came Reddit with 0.26%.

WeAreSocial and Hootsuite report in their 2019 Datareportal findings that by January 2019, East Africa had an internet penetration of 32%, with a social media penetration of 8%, with 62% of mobile connectivity. To break down further for Uganda, its population is estimated to have hit 45 million, with 24.89 million having mobile subscriptions, 19 million being internet users, 2.5 million being active social media users and, finally, 2.3 million being mobile social media users.

Women and girls from Uganda and all over the world are accessing the internet as we speak now. That does not mean there are no other women and girls who are not using the internet. In fact, the reasons why some women and girls don't use the internet range from issues of affordability (handset, data and OTT costs), usability and skills (not knowing how to access the internet on a mobile set, not knowing how to use a mobile set, reading and writing difficulties), relevance (the internet not being relevant to them, insufficient local information), issues of safety and security (insufficient content available in local languages, harmful content, contact from strangers, information security) to accessibility (no access to an internet-enabled phone, the internet draining their gadget batteries, poor network coverage, lack of approval from their families to use the internet, little or

no access to agent support, a slow connection).

I cannot stress enough the fact that women and girls are human beings just like you and I. With that come their rights. Whether they are aware of these rights or not is a story for another day. I want to direct our discussion to the internet and the role it has played in advancing the rights of women and girls!

Article 3 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that '[e]veryone has the right to life, liberty and security of person'. The internet comes with the advantage that once you have social media accounts of your own and access to them, you have the power to express yourself on them the way you like and about

what you want. Do you remember the Women's March of Uganda in 2018? It was organised by women and girls to speak out against sexual harassment and any other form of violence aimed at them and once their intention was made over the internet, it raged like a wildfire and all corners of the world got to know about it.

With the internet comes an opportunity to explore financial freedom. Financial freedom is a right to be enjoyed by women and girls, just as the men do. In Uganda today, women and girls run their own businesses, which range from dealing in clothing and shoes to catering to the need for fitness and relaxation, among others, and they utilise the internet as the major marketing avenue.

With the presence of the internet around us has come knowledge about women and girls' rights. If you have mastered or now know your way a little bit around the internet, you will realise that it is the one place where women and girls' rights can be accessed from any source literally anywhere in the world. Many times, learning something 'new', say from a document like the Universal Declaration of Human Rights or the Maputo Protocol or constitutional amendments in the Constitution of Uganda of 1995, causes excitement and fascination. People get to share what they have learnt about on their social media platforms, hence creating awareness about it all. You should be aware that all this happens in a matter of seconds, usually at the total discretion of the user, and involves a very large

“ The GlobalStats desk at Statcounter has it that as of May 2019, Facebook commanded **64.5%** of its use in Uganda, Pinterest came in second with **20.64%**, Twitter third with **9.62%**, YouTube fourth with **3.62%**, Instagram fifth with **1.17%** and in sixth position came Reddit with **0.26%**.



audience. I had a chat with Ahumuza Patience about these possibilities and this is what she said:

Social media is playing a big role in boosting the feminist movement. It has created a safe space and given women a platform to share their experiences like sexual harassment, domestic violence, gender-based violence, sexist work systems, among others. Hashtags like #Metoo, #StopSexualHarassmentAtWork, #AmInext and #MeTooUg, among others, have created a sense of togetherness. It has portrayed that we are not alone and if we come together a lot will change...our voices will be heard.

Article 16 (1) of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states:

(1) Men and women of full age, without any limitation due to race, nationality or religion, have the right to marry and to found a family. They are entitled to equal rights as to marriage, during marriage and at its dissolution.

With the introduction of the internet, many people have become courageous enough to open up about what they think or want to say on the dissolution of a marriage, irrespective of their culture, nationality or religion. In a way, this has promoted the growth of transparency and ratcheted up the pressure to dismantle patriarchy, on which so much in the world is still hinged.

Article 4 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights that states that '[n]

o one shall be held in slavery or servitude; slavery and the slave trade shall be prohibited in all their forms'. Uganda, for a number of years now, has been a country where many young women and girls are trafficked to engage in labour in the Arab countries like the United Arab Emirates, Oman and Qatar, among others. It is a terrible thing that so many of them have been treated like slaves by their bosses and contacts! Quite a number of them have been able to utilise the internet to share what they are going through wherever they are. As such, the culprits have been called out to behave better and to keep their word. Information in the form of chats on WhatsApp, email and videos has spread like a wildfire

here and, in some instances, the relevant authorities, like the Uganda Police, the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Uganda's foreign missions have responded and rescued some of these women and girls. As a result, a number of the girls and women have been brought back to Uganda.

Article 33 (1) (2) of the Constitution of Uganda provides for the rights of women thus:

(1) Women shall be given full and equal dignity of the person, and equal opportunities in political, economic and social activities with men.

(2) The State shall provide for the facilities and opportunities necessary to improve or realise women's full potential and advancement.

There are also specific laws, such as the National Action Plan on Women, the Gender Policy Act, the Domestic Violence Act, and the Female Genital Mutilation Act that aim to advance women's rights in Uganda. However, as noted above, they need to be conscientiously enforced and implemented for gender equality and the empowerment of women to be fully realised. There are no specific laws focusing on fighting violence against women online. In 2014, the Government of Uganda enacted the Anti-Pornography Act as a measure to curb pornography both online and offline; however, the law has been used to harass women victims of so-called 'revenge' pornography.

The Stakeholders Report of March 2016 submitted by the Women of Uganda Network (WOUGNET), the Association for Progressive Communications (APC) and Collaboration on International ICT Policy for East and Southern Africa (CIPESA), on the background to

internet access and online freedoms in Uganda is worth quoting here:

While freedom to access the internet is generally unfettered, access is mainly restricted by infrastructural and economic reasons. Only 18% of Ugandans live in urban areas, and just over 650,000 people, out of a total estimated population of 37.5 million, were reported to have access to electricity by the national distributor in 2014. Despite the enthusiasm for connectivity in the capital, the rural regions of Uganda remain grossly underserved.

The majority of Ugandan women live in rural areas, constituting more than 90% of citizens, particularly the northern region, and therefore do not have consistent access to electricity or telecommunication services, including limited internet access. At the moment, mobile cellular signals cover almost 100% of the population, but in rural areas these signals are weak and huge improvements are needed, including reduction of broad-band costs as well as tax burdens, which are three times as high as the average in Africa.

For those Ugandans who are online, the internet is only 'partly free'. According to the 2015 Freedom House rankings, the Ugandan government is increasing its surveillance of Ugandan citizens, thus rendering the internet less conducive to freedom of expression and discussion. There are several laws in Uganda that severely infringe on internet rights and have been used to either prosecute or intimidate internet users. These laws include the Regulation of Interception of Communication Act (2010), the Computer Misuse Act (2011), the Anti-Pornography Act (2014), and the Uganda Communications Act, (2013). These laws have been widely criticised

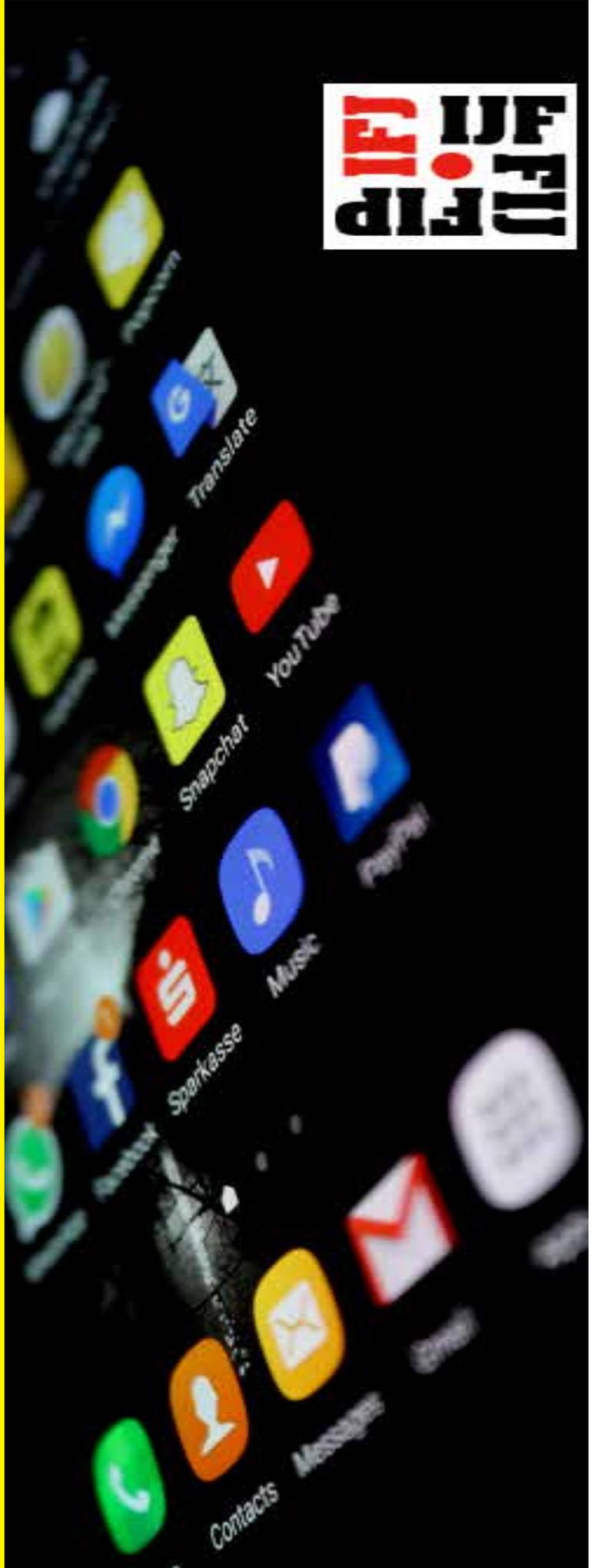
for violating individuals' right to privacy on the internet. Recently, the Ugandan government, through the Attorney General, presented a bill to Parliament which human rights activists believe is largely intended to gag media freedom and critical opinion in Uganda, including free speech on social media. The Uganda Communications (Amendment) Bill, 2016 seeks to give the executive arm of government outright powers to control communications in any way the sector minister deems fit.

In conclusion, I say that the internet has been and still is very fundamental in advancing the rights of women and girls in Uganda. If the challenges that the women and girls face in the ICT sector can be urgently addressed, I will confidently say that we are all destined for a better Uganda - women and girls will be better placed to defend their rights whenever they are violated through the internet.

“ While freedom to access the internet is generally unfettered, access is mainly restricted by infrastructural and economic reasons. Only **18%** of Ugandans live in urban areas, and just over **650,000** people, out of a total estimated population of **37.5** million, were reported to have access to electricity by the national distributor in 2014.

#DontTroll

STOP TROLLING WOMEN ON THE INTERNET





HOW THE **INTERNET** IS BEING USED TO PERPETRATE **VIOLENCE** AGAINST WOMEN

Brian Mutebi and Owen Wagabaza

Violence against women (VAW) and girls is one of the most rampant human rights violations worldwide. The World Health Organisation estimates that globally at least 35% of women experience violence in their lifetime and 30% experience intimate partner violence (IPV).

The rise in the use of the internet and other information and communication technologies (ICTs) has led to the emergence of new forms of violence against women and girls, in online spaces. Online VAW (OVAW) encompasses acts of gender-based violence that are committed, abetted or aggravated, in part or in

full, by the use of ICTs such as social media platforms and emails.

In Uganda, online violence against women and girls is exhibited in a number of ways, including non-consensual sharing, revealing or posting of sexually explicit images or videos of a person, cyberstalking, unsolicited sexual advances, or unsolicited touches. It also includes sharing of degrading images or material, false accusations, defamation and slander.

Susan Atim, Programme Officer, WOUNET explains that cyber stalkers could, for instance, use an

email to tamper with another person's computer by uploading a tracking device without their consent. Cyber stalkers also trace a person's emails, internet use or other electronic communications or otherwise and keep them under surveillance without their consent, including giving offensive material to a person or leaving it where it will be found by a person intentionally or recklessly doing something that would physically or mentally harm them or make them fear for their lives or the safety of another person who could be their loved one.

Online sexual harassment also happens when a perpetrator sends unwanted, abusive, threatening, or obscene messages to a victim via e-mail or instant messaging, or uses any communication device to regularly contact the victim. Atim says this happens more often than is reported. 'The case of Kabarole Woman Member of Parliament who was cyber harassed by Brian Isiko only got public attention because she was an MP, but many ordinary women go through this daily,' she asserts.

The United Nations estimates that 95% of aggressive behaviour, harassment, abusive language and denigrating images in online spaces are aimed at women and come from current or former male partners.

Many survivors say online violence is intended to shame, humiliate and intimidate women, undermine their character and silence them so that they don't express their opinions. This usually happens when women's voice express opposing views on politics and women's rights, particularly in relation to sexuality and reproductive health among others. The motives vary from blackmail to extortion of money from the victims.

'These newer forms of violence and abuse are a manifestation of existing discrimination and violence in society,' says Patricia Nyasuna, Programme Officer, Gender and ICT at Women of Uganda Network (WOUGNET). 'They are rooted in the same systems of patriarchy, oppression and gender inequalities, which are underpinned by unequal power relations and discriminatory social norms.'

Impact

Online violence results in psychological, physical and emotional harm to the

victims. 'It affects their health and wellbeing, as well as their ability to voice their opinions and participate in public life,' says Atim. 'Many women victims report feeling threatened, drained, anxious, angry, sad, insecure and fearful about their physical safety and have a sense of helplessness and powerlessness.'

Atim illustrates how online violence drains the victims thus: 'The victims, who most times are women, say they have to feel mentally prepared before accessing online spaces as they find themselves using a lot of energy to engage or 'fight' in online spaces and conversations, either for themselves or on behalf of other women.'

It also leads to self-censorship. Women victims are forced to change their ways of using technology and in some cases withdraw from the debate or online spaces altogether. This affects their right to participate in public life and also their freedom of expression.

A WOUGNET research study conducted in 2017 showed that 71% of women victims said the threat of online violence and abuse affected their participation on social media. The respondents reported having become less willing to engage in public discourse, speak up or voice their opinions on matters they would otherwise be willing to comment on. Some withdrew from certain conversations – thereby not expressing their opinions on these issues – while others withdrew from the internet or social media altogether.

'On certain days, I want to speak about something but I choose not to because of the backlash,' reported one victim. 'It changes how I engage, what I choose and choose not to say. I want to speak a lot more about rights but I pull back. I can speak about women

in development and women's leadership but when I speak about other issues it has to be on a day when I'm ready to fight.'

Challenges to fighting online violence

The challenges hampering the fight against online violence against women vary from an overwhelming sense of impunity to the anonymity of perpetrators. This is fuelled by the inadequate response from ICT companies in dealing with reports of online violence and abuse against women. Amnesty International's #Toxic Twitter research found that despite having policies in place to act on online violence and abuse, Twitter appears to be inadequately enforcing these policies.

'Mechanisms for recourse of online violence are insufficient. I reported two users on Twitter and they decided the language wasn't abusive. Twitter doesn't understand my context and doesn't understand what gender abuse is and how it takes place,' one survivor was quoted as saying.

There is also inadequate law enforcement for, despite setting up a cybercrime unit, observers argue that the Uganda Police personnel do not have the right training, skills or resources to protect women from online violence and abuse or bring the perpetrators to justice. The police are also accused of trivialising online violence and abuse against women. This negative attitude, coupled with limited capacity, undermines access to justice for women.



The existing law enforcement mechanisms are either gender-insensitive or the enforcement is weak and biased. The State Minister for Ethics, Fr. Lokodo, for example, has in the past threatened to arrest women victims whose nudes leaked on social media, rather than focusing on the perpetrators. In addition, the Uganda Computer Misuse Act (2011), which would be a good tool to curb OVAW, does not describe OVAW or how it could be handled in explicit terms but generally, which make it hard to pin down culprits. This is aggravated by ambiguous interpretations of existing legislation addressing gender-based violence, data privacy and cybercrime.

Where is the remedy?

Women's rights campaigners contend that curbing violence against women and girls requires a multifaceted approach and the involvement of everyone, both the traditional and non-traditional actors.

Gender equality and women's rights campaigners are taking the message to the exclusive group of the richest nations, the G7. The recent G7 meeting in Biarritz, France featured discussions on gender equality. The G7 Gender Equality Advisory Council recommended 79 good practices in gender equality laws, urging the G7 and other countries to commit themselves through the 'Biarritz Partnership' to addressing all forms of inequalities. The call included ending gender-based violence and ensuring full equality between women and men in public policies. 'We are not only asking you to be brave, we are asking you to be the great generation of leaders who will take bold steps. We call upon you to pronounce 2030 as the expiry date of gender inequality,' the UN Women Executive Director, Phumzile Mlambo, urged leaders of the seven richest countries.

“Mechanisms for recourse of online violence are insufficient. I reported two users on Twitter and they decided the language wasn't abusive. Twitter doesn't understand my context and doesn't understand what gender abuse is and how it takes place,' one survivor was quoted as saying.



WHY ONLINE VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IS PERSISTENT IN UGANDA DESPITE EXISTING LAWS AND POLICIES

Owen Wagabaza

In order to try and answer the above question one of the Arise contributors spoke to a number of people whose views are captured below.

“ The law on online communication is not explicit on harassment’ – Bill Ndyamuhaki, Cybercrime Investigator at the Uganda Police Force.



CYBER-BULLYING



TROLLING



HATE SPEECH



DOXXING



PUBLIC SHAMING



CYBER-STALKING



**INTIMIDATION
/THREAT**



The biggest problem is excitement about social media; people are excited with the new technology. Many WhatsApp groups share pornography. You don't solicit it, but people send it freely. Unlike before, with the new technology, someone can easily send you a whole video.

The other challenge is ignorance of the law. Many people don't know that when you threaten someone, it is a crime; that when you share nudes, it is a crime. We arrest them every day and they say they didn't know, yet ignorance of the law is no defence. The fact is that the moment you share that (nude) picture, you have shared pornography.

Then the absence of a law that regulates online communication. All we have is the Computer Misuse Act, but it does not talk about online communication explicitly; it generalises it. Yet matters of the law require that you prove beyond

reasonable doubt.

We also encounter challenges of victims becoming obstacles of justice. When women come as complainants and we propose taking the culprit to court, many times the woman will forgive the culprit, especially if he is a boyfriend or former boyfriend. There are very few who continue with the case; many of them pull out.

The other challenge is some culprits live beyond our borders where they cannot be extradited, so it becomes very difficult to apprehend them from countries where we don't have extradition treaties.

**"Online crimes are sophisticated,"
Yona Okoth Gongo, Head of Secretariat,
Technical Policy Forum, Ministry of ICT
and National Guidance**

Regulating online behaviour, especially violence against women,

is inherently more difficult than regulating behaviour offline. This is because of the diverse nature of crimes committed online and the sophistication of perpetrators. People intimidate, character assassinate, threaten to harm or rape, and harass women online using anonymous identities. It therefore becomes very difficult for law enforcement agencies to track, to arrest and proffer charges against such individuals, let alone regulate behaviour online because of their sophisticated nature, regardless of the existence of laws and policies.

Sometimes, because of the viral nature of online communication, cases of harassment are not reported. The victims fear that by reporting, they will instead fuel more violent conversations online, which will negatively affect them. Some victims have little hope that

the perpetrators will ever be brought to account and this keeps them away from reporting violent behaviour.

Online violence against women can only be reduced; it cannot be stopped. There is need to continuously sensitise women regarding what they can do to protect themselves online and where to seek redress in case of violence. Continuous assurance that something is being done or will be done to help them if they are faced with such situations will encourage many to report cases to the authorities. Law enforcement agencies should also be equipped better with tools and skills to track and arrest perpetrators of violent online behaviour.

“Parents, community are to blame for violence,” Fr Simon Lokodo, Minister for Ethics and Integrity

The biggest problem we have is that people have succumbed to the pressure of external influence and have taken pleasure in doing what is abominable and culturally wrong.

We have a challenge of commercialisation of nude photos and videos. I recently met film producers and told them that much as it is their role to educate and entertain the world, they have opted to misuse this talent by poisoning the minds and psychology of the people. We have arrested people and taken them to court, but they say they are adults who are free to do whatever they want, and it is unconstitutional to arrest people who are behaving indecently. The biggest problem, therefore, is apathy. But above all, I want to blame the parents and communities for allowing such things to happen; allowing their children to indulge in ugly things and saying nothing about it or not even reprimanding them for that matter. If you keep silent, it becomes acceptable; but if you caution them, people think twice before doing it.

We therefore need to enforce the laws, and sensitise the people about

the destructiveness of such behaviour, and that should be a responsibility of everyone to ensure an end to such behaviour. Everyone should say no to this kind of behaviour, be it religious leaders, politicians or ordinary citizens. Involving everyone is the best way to curb violence against women.

“Law enforcers don’t understand online violence against women,” Miria Matembe, Women Rights Activist and Former Minister for Ethics and Integrity

The limited knowledge about online violence against women (OVAW) is one of the reasons why OVAW is still persistent. We have laws and policies but they are not effective. Perpetrators go scot-free because everyone, including the police, doesn’t understand OVAW.

We have seen so many women victims of OVAW, but little is done about their situation. Even those who report cases to the police rarely get justice. Instead, they are accused of being the ones behind the plot. Take, for example, the case of non-consensual sharing of photos and videos. The Minister for Ethics and Integrity has many a time come out to warn the victims instead of protecting them. How do you expect to put a stop on OVAW when even the policymakers are yet to fully grasp it?

The other factor is that the policies in place are generalised and do not explicitly address the real problem. The Computer Misuse Act, for example, is not clear on OVAW, yet it is the same Act that law enforcers refer to for guidance.

There is, therefore, need for massive sensitisation of all stakeholders to online violence against women, as well as coming up with policies that specifically address OVAW.

“Online violence against women is a fallacy,” Pastor Martin Ssempe, Religious Leader and Activist

This is a trick by feminists to convince the government to police and take away people’s freedom of speech and normal conversation about men and women. They redefine it as online violence and harassment. These are efforts of Europeans to impose draconian gender laws on Africa.

You cannot have only one side of gender discussions from women. All this is intended to deny men a chance to debate these issues; it is about blocking men from having their say. Feminists, for example, fronted the idea that a Woman Member of Parliament was harassed by a young man last year. This is the same woman who had been published in the New Vision as single and searching for a man. When the young man read the story, he tried his chances, and what was wrong with that? Unfortunately, without shame, the woman went to court and had the young man jailed.

There is, therefore, nothing like online violence against women. This is simply a plan to take away our freedom of speech and police our language. It is total confusion.

When it comes to nudes, many a time it is the women themselves who leak these nudes. There is a pornographic culture in this generation. Look at the clothes women wear in public and imagine what they do in private.

They ask each other for nudes, and when they fall into the hands of the authorities, they start crying foul, but when in actual sense they were the initiators. I therefore have no sympathy for them. What I have experienced is actually the opposite of what they are claiming. I have no doubt that there may be genuine cases of cyber harassment, but I am yet to witness them.



IS YOUR FRIEND
BEING ATTACKED
ONLINE?





INTERNET SAFETY GUIDES FOR WOMEN AND GIRLS

Arise Reporter

The onset of the internet on the Ugandan scene was accompanied by unparalleled excitement, particularly among the young generation. No doubt the internet is of great use in the contemporary world not only for research purposes, but also to establish job connections and, obviously, relationships, both personal and official.

Regarding relationships as facilitated by internet platforms, for many internet users, life before the internet was quite like a prison hemmed in so many physical boundaries. The internet, therefore, felt like a 'prison break' of sorts, considering that the physical boundaries of homes and offices were bypassed, overtaken by the new innovation. Similarly, society, which has traditionally been helpful in nurturing its people, has significantly been cut out through the creation of a

fairly private environment, only being dragged into the fray when things go wrong.

To further put this discussion into perspective, let us analyse one high-profile example of how the internet has been used, with a woman on the receiving end. A few years ago, a Princess from one of the kingdoms got married to an American at a classic wedding attended by thousands, and graced by the President of Uganda, H.E. Yoweri Kaguta Museveni. Before long, he American husband, using his Facebook account, announced that his marriage to the Princess was over, and went on to expose his personal grievances. By the mere click of a button, he had wreaked enough havoc. Even when the princess attempted to fight back via the same medium, the damage was already done.

Two wrongs do not make a right, and soon the entire world would know what really ought to have been a bedroom affair. This is just how the internet has sometimes been used to promote OVAW - like a match setting an entire forest on fire.

It ought to be highlighted that women and girls remain key drivers on the internet, majorly social media platforms, not necessarily as users, but as targets of abusers. While one cannot claim that men are hell bent on abusing women per se, it is a fact that women and girls generally receive a great deal of attention from men, and are objectified both by those seeking genuine relationships and those hitting on them for the fun of it, plus, of course, the obvious....sexual interest, and harassment. Often when relationships go wrong, women and girls



**My Yes
means Yes and
my No means NO.
Its my body, my
equipment and
my right to be
online.**

suffer an unfair share of the fallout, as their image is so easily tarnished as the men simply move on. Even when there is no relationship to talk of, women are still sexually harassed, simply because of who they are. It is not uncommon for a woman to receive friendship invites or needless compliments from total strangers who just saw her picture online. Some care not about her qualification or even marital status; all they look forward to is an opportunity to take her to bed.

At this point, therefore, the question of protection becomes essential. The following are some of the possible internet protection mechanisms that women and girls could take advantage of:

- Women and girls should avoid sharing passwords even with the closest of friends and relatives, as this may pose a risk even long before relationships break up.
- Ample care must be taken regarding how much information is shared online, including pictures and videos, particularly material that may bounce back some day to embarrass and haunt.
- Avoid meeting online acquaintances alone, especially on the first date. So many people are capable of perfecting a pseudo-identity behind the virtual online curtain to woo their targets, and harm them if they so wish.
- Double-check friend requests before accepting them, even if you are a celebrity. Many times there is a tendency to easily let people in, just because you share similar contacts, but it is best to open up to people you have met personally before or whose identities are obvious.
- Do not accept freebies, both as online gifts and unwarranted gifts and offers from online friends. Remember the popular saying that 'free things are expensive'. Someone may want to make you pay in the long run for what you received.
- Block stalkers and any other people you don't wish to interact with, with commonsense being your first line of defence. Your instinct is very critical in this, and you do not have to explain yourself or your reasoning to anyone.
- When using video recording services like Web cam or WhatsApp video or even Skype, be very careful as these may easily be hacked by spammers. Be sure to appear before the camera as decent as you would in everyday life.
- Be careful not to Geotag by exposing your current location as this may play into the hands of your enemies.
- Above all, and as a golden rule, women using the internet must act 'official' even when conducting unofficial engagements online.



FIGHTING ONLINE ABUSE SHOULDN'T BE UP TO THE **VICTIMS** AND/OR **SURVIVORS**

Tumusiime K. Deo

While taking no pleasure whatsoever in resurrecting the story of a certain Martha Kay, there cannot be a better real-life example than this to exemplify the pangs of online violence against women.

Both women and men anywhere in the world, sane and perhaps insane alike, will clearly understand how important privacy is, to especially a woman's body. To wake up one day and find your entire nakedness is trending all over social media, is akin to being killed by firing squad

when you have committed no crime. No amount of words could quantify the magnitude of pain Martha suffered on that fateful day, and I suppose subsequent months. That is if she will ever get over it in her lifetime. And, one needn't even have known her

prior to the incident in order to feel the torture meted out to her. Yet this was but one example of so many other women whose images, knowingly and unknowingly, have been splashed all over online media by men seeking to satisfy their sexual ego, without caring at all about the person at the receiving end.

The public was definitely, though not surprisingly, divided in opinion about the above development. To some people, Martha Kay was blamed in the first place for posing before a camera to have her nudity captured. Never mind that this could originally have been in her private space. To those, who suspected the photo to have been leaked by a boyfriend, this was a deplorable and needless act by a very mean man. Others would have done the same to hurt their own girlfriends once the relationship went awry. Yet others simply enjoyed visual satiety as they were treated to image of the body of a beautiful naked young woman. What all this means is that no matter how careful Martha or, for that matter, any woman tries to be in life, in the contemporary digital world, such incidents may never be ruled out provided no deliberate safeguards are in place. And how unfair it is that a person cannot even afford to be naked in their own house! Yes, someone may be peeping through the window with a digital camera, now readily available even on the cheapest smartphone.

Oftentimes, there is a tendency for people to want to hurt someone, because they feel distant in terms of human relations. Similarly, a boyfriend will not expose his girlfriend's nakedness except after they have split up. At this point, they feel like strangers to each other. However, I always like to emphasise that a woman anywhere is a woman

everywhere. That woman being exposed is a mother, sister, cousin, auntie, friend, workmate, employee, grandmother to someone. As human beings, therefore, we must never do unto others what we would never wish done unto us or our very own.

Of course, all this is not to say that there are no women out there who wilfully expose their nakedness either for money or showbiz, but still that doesn't make it right. The fact is that some innocent soul is being scandalised somewhere, especially children. Those who are already parents or those aspiring to be parents should never be party to hurtful online acts, because it could happen to your own child someday. It is therefore important that we all exercise maximum restraint.

Yet while it may not be easy to stop online violence against women, considering how fast information flows, each one of us could play a role in reducing the magnitude of its effect. This could be done by using our own social media platforms to condemn the violence in question, by way of emphasising the danger it poses to our children, for example. We should also desist from the objectification of women and girls through fantasy by deleting such images and videos from our phones and other electronic gadgets, and avoiding forwarding any such information no matter how far-fetched or unreal it may appear to be. Yes, I know that there are hundreds of easily accessible online resources that on the surface look innocent or computer-generated, including blue movies, but while that may be the case, in other cases it could be real, like in Martha's case.

Thus, the need to totally guard against tainting of the mind by

rejecting such resources that promote or those that may trigger online violence against women. Finally, considering the immense undesirability of online violence against women and girls, it ought to be criminalised and therefore be punishable by law. Members of society should then report all suspected culprits to the relevant authorities or flag them as wrong elements to be shunned. Otherwise, just as online violence against women is not an individual problem, in the same way addressing the same should not be entirely left to the victims. An English adage says, 'It takes a village to raise a child.' We could have the saying adapted to read thus: 'It takes a whole village to protect a girl child/woman from online violence.'

“Oftentimes, there is a tendency for people to want to hurt someone, because they feel distant in terms of human relations. Similarly, a boyfriend will not expose his girlfriend's nakedness except after they have split up. At this point, they feel like strangers to each other. However, I always like to emphasise that a woman anywhere is a woman everywhere. That woman being exposed is a mother, sister, cousin, auntie, friend, workmate, employee, grandmother to someone.

STOP

**ONLINE
VIOLENCE**

**AGAINST
WOMEN**



FEATURE: INTERVIEW WITH PRUDENCE NYAMISHANA 'ON COMBATING ONLINE VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN'

Arise Reporter

Prudence is a social justice blogger and author at Global Voices. She has consulted for World Bank Uganda Office, UN Women, HIVOs East Africa, and the Centre for Public Interest Law, providing technical assistance with strategic digital communication tools. She is currently coordinating a project named 'Story telling for Human Rights and Social Inclusion.' Brian Mutebi had an extensive interview with her



What is digital security?

Digital security is protection from intrusion. Take the example of a home where you lock your house with a padlock to prevent access to intruders. That's offline. So, digital security involves 'software' measures such as protection of online accounts such as Facebook and Gmail accounts, and the hardware component such as controlling access to your phone or laptop.

What are women's rights online?

A woman should be able to access and enjoy internet freedoms just like anyone else. She is not barred from accessing the internet because of her gender. It's about women being able to express self and enjoy the freedom online without any prohibitions. It's safety on online, affordability and accessibility.

Why is important for women to be online?

Women need to freely express self. It is a space for learning, reading and getting information. It is a space

for connecting, communication, and remember communication is a human right.

Some people say women simply gossip, but who determines so? No one should determine for me what is useful; but I. As long as I am not infringing on the rights of other people, I am free to do what I want. Why is it that nobody says men use the internet unproductively? Don't men share their nudes? Why isn't it talked about, but only women? Let women use the internet the way they want to! Yet I can tell you women use the internet very productively. Many mothers get information online on breastfeeding, for example. Back then, mothers could get such information from their grandmothers, today it's 'Dr Google'. Women are using the internet to market their products. I use it, for example, to share my thoughts through writing. Women use the internet to speak truth to power. We share books on how to empower ourselves, for inspiration, therapy, meditation, prayer, innovations and

tools to solve local problems.

What is the cost of women not being online?

Women are not homogeneous. Some will miss information on available markets for their products while others will be unable to compare quality and prices. Women will miss out on cheaper sources of information. For example, I can use 500 shillings and get on WhatsApp and get lots of information, but if you're not online, you probably need to call, which will cost you more. Some people will even die for lack of access to information.

What are the risks and dangers women face online?

The internet is not safe because we live in a patriarchal society. There is open hatred for women. For example, women who drive are branded prostitutes or thieves, yet we, women, work and earn money.



There is stalking; unsolicited love messages as the case was for Hon. Sylvia Rwabwogo because some people think they have power over women. Even when she says no, the man will stalk her, and then the public (media) will act as though they don't understand these issues. You will see a headline 'Man jailed for expressing love to an MP'. That's wrong! It's harassment. It should have been 'Man jailed for cyber stalking or harassment'.

There is cyber bullying. The online space can be like a war zone for women, not to mention leaking of women's nudes, where some women contemplate committing suicide. Yet you will hear some people say 'It's the women who leak these photos', meaning they are to blame. But a woman's body is not a crime; it's my body. It sounds controversial but women have the right to take those photos. It's my body and I know what to do with it.

So, what is the problem, who is to blame?

Before a white man (religion) came, some people walked almost naked and there was no big deal about it. Sometimes women in Karamoja and other places walk with their breasts out but the culture there is that you do not touch someone's body who is not your wife. So, when did this thing start that women are supposed to dress a certain way? We have got to stop being hypocrites. The problem today is that a woman's body is sexualised. If in my moment of excitement, I share photos with the person I love, it's within the confines of confidentiality with that person. If those photos get on the internet, it is confidentiality broken. Yet the anti-pornography law will come after me whose nudes were leaked!

The act stipulates 'production and distribution' so if indeed this is pornography, why only come for me and not the one who distributed it? Some will say it's the women who produce it to gain popularity and things like that, but there is no proof that women leak their nudes; it is just an allegation. Besides, why think like that? It's because of patriarchy; it's patriarchy that hates women. It is because everybody, the police know that the crowd will be against women.

What is the history to online harassment?

It has come with the internet, and the internet is relatively a new thing. But violence against women offline – men battering their wives, rape, and child marriage – has been there for a long time. We have got to deal with it, however, whether offline or online. One can't say 'it was just a tweet'. Your behaviour offline should reflect your behaviour online. I shouldn't see two people in one: One calling women bitches and the same person talking about respect for women.

How do we ensure there is a total end to violence against women online?

You need the will from policymakers to make policies that protect women. We have laws such as the Computer Misuse Act but I have not heard of a situation where a woman is being protected by the Act. Instead it's being used by government to curtail freedoms such as the case of Dr Stella Nyanzi who was expressing herself but the government came after her. We just do not need policies or laws but policymakers who understand the devastation that online violence poses to women and girls.

We have made progress on physical violence. For example, we have the

Domestic Violence Act (2010) where women can seek redress, but when it comes to online violence, you will be referred to this or that law. We need a specific law on violence against women and girls online, the way we have the Prohibition of Female Genital Mutilation Act, (2010). We need a law that is explicit so that you do not have to look for a section or line in the Anti-Pornography Act or Computer Misuse Act that talks about violence against women and girls. We need a complete Act that will spell out the consequences of harassing women and girls that women will have as their Bible.

Yes, we have the cyber unit of the police but we need specificity, for cybercrime can be broad and mean anything. Cybercrime can be between nations or banks. We need a specialised unit on violence against women and girls. We have got to realise the seriousness of this crime. Stalking, for example, can lead to death. If a man is obsessed with me, he can physically harm me. Psychopaths can be dangerous. We need judges, lawyers that understand these issues so that women are protected online. Remember there is a big cost for women not being online.

Are there best practices that Uganda can adopt?

I need to do more research but I was reading the other day and I saw that in South Africa one can pay as high as 40,000 rand in fines for sharing a woman's nude. That's a hell of a lot of money. There should be heavy price for one to pay. We should also adopt tools that make it easy to track people who shared nudes. Some



say women do not report cases to the authorities, but can they report when they are condemned by the police? They will say 'oli musiwuufu wa mpisa' (bad mannered). The Anti-Pornography Act comes after them, the women who are the victims, not the perpetrators of these crimes. How then can women come out in such circumstances?

We need data privacy and protection not only on Facebook or things like that, but we give out data every day, for example when registering for the national ID, driving permit etc. They have information on what I do, where I live, but how safe is my data with the people I give it? Can we be assured that the people we entrust our data with keep it safe?

What can a woman in her individual capacity do to ensure digital security?

Have a password on every device. A password is your padlock. And it should not only be a password but a strong password. Do not share your password with anyone, not even your husband or lover or sibling because that's where problems emanate. Look at it in the way you lock your house

and do not allow intruders. Then do not use one password for everything, for example the same password for your email, ATM PIN or mobile money code. To avoid cases of forgetting multiple passwords, there are tools such as Key Pass where you can keep multiple passwords and have one strong password that protects and gives you access to them all.

Secondly, what you do not want in public, do not keep on your device. You may want it for yourself but it's risky unless when you are comfortable with your body going out there in public because someone can hack into your device. By the way, it may not necessarily be nudes but some confidential information. You need to keep it safe. Read about the trends and understand what's changing. For example, the conversation today is that passwords are becoming a problem so they are creating a facial identifier. Keep up with the trends.

Sometimes people fail to protect self because they feel they do not need to do so: 'I am just an ordinary person, who is after me?' Then one day someone is actually after you. That's why for some people, say, on

Instagram, it is only their friends who can access their accounts. When my account is private, not even Google can access it. The more you get literate in digital technology, the more you will learn to protect yourself. When you build a reputation online, you want to protect it.

How do you predict the future of digital security?

It is hard to even predict two years because technology keeps changing. Currently about 46% of Ugandans are connected online. I am not certain of the disaggregated data, but the number of women is lower. More women, however, will increasingly get online but face challenges of being new online. Those online will increasingly know the importance of protecting self.

There will be greater mobilisation online by women, movements such as #WomenMatchUg which was organised online will increase. More women will demand for their rights; women will continue to speak truth to power.

ONLINE HARASSMENT IN FOCUS: THE DEVASTATING EFFECTS ON SURVIVORS

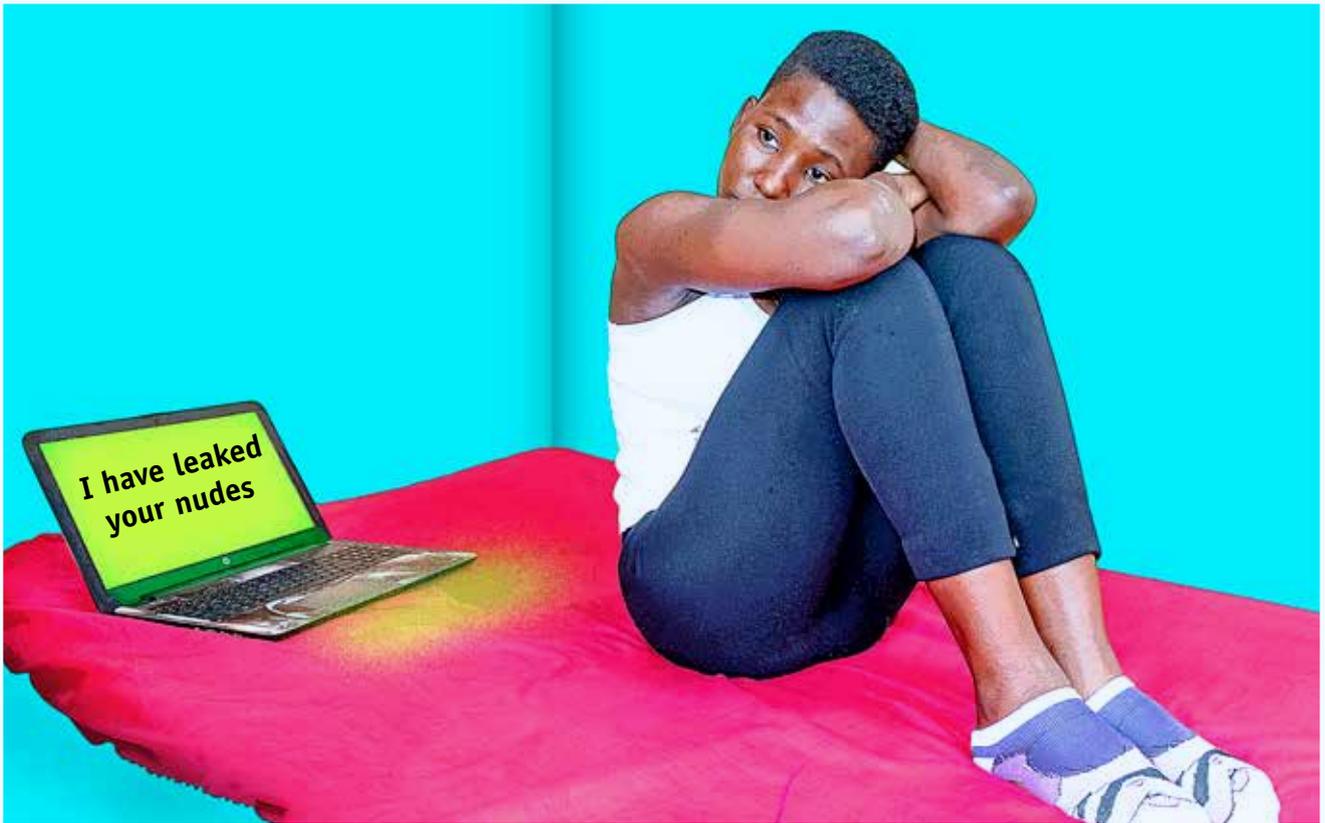
Arise Reporter

On 24 July 2017, an online publication, Chano8, had a screaming headline: Desire Luzinda Unleashes Fresh Nudes. This was after the singer's nudes leaked to the media again.

A couple of months before, another online publication, Xclusive, on 13 December 2016, had labelled her a 'nude star' who 'for years has been one of the most lusted after female Ugandans'.

Luzinda is only one celebrity whose nudes have leaked to the media. Others are Judith Heard, Martha 'Kay' Kagimba and Sanyu Mweruka. In the case of Joy





Kihuguru, a popular city pastor, it was not her nudes that leaked to the media but rather a man who stalked her, duping her into agreeing to marry him. However, after she had introduced him to her parents, she found out that he had done the same thing to several other women.

In a June 2018 interview with Pastor Mugisha Mondo on online channel SuperNatural TV, Kihuguru narrated her ordeal: 'I have a Facebook page... This is a gentleman who reached out to me. He used to follow me. He wanted me to pray for him. One day he decided to come. He said, "I am in Uganda. I would like to meet you." Like many others do. So many people call and ask to meet me and beautiful relationships have developed. I agreed to see him. He said he had issues with his land. I went and prayed for the land on Entebbe Road and then he seemed to be interested in me. He told me he was not married. He was interested in settling down with

somebody...'

The effect

With a cruel media and public reaction, one can only imagine the severity of the impact that online harassment has on survivors. 'I was devastated,' Luzinda revealed in a 4 March 2015 interview with the New Vision. 'I did not eat for over four days. I didn't know I would recover; I was so devastated at the time that I wanted to leave the country.' The incident also affected her relationship with her daughter, 'My daughter was taken away from me by her dad. But some people talked to him and he brought her back. He didn't even want to speak to me for some time and it was understandable.'

'I paid very heavily,' Kihuguru said in the SuperNatural TV interview. 'Naturally I am a very reserved person. I don't just allow anybody into my private space. I allowed this gentleman in, believing what he said. And another

mistake I made was not to ask anybody "Do you know this man?" He took advantage of that because he realised "she is a very quiet person, she keeps to herself, she won't ask anybody about me". I felt betrayed. This man was married; he lied to me he was not married...I ran to God in prayer. I cried...'

For three years, Kihuguru was hurting. 'I didn't come out three years ago because the pain was too much. I was in shock. I did not believe that was the man I had brought into my inner circle,' Kihuguru told Pastor Mondo.

For Judith Heard, a socialite, leaking of her nudes to the media felt like being 'stabbed'; while for Martha Kay, that was 'probably the most challenging three months I have ever had to face.' Martha claimed, however, that it was the most empowering experience at the same time. 'I have been

learning, unlearning and relearning a lot of things so as to grow into a much better, wiser and stronger version of myself,' she said on her Facebook page.

While there is always a road to recovery as the storm calms, the torment does not seem to end even when the incident is long happened. The media oftentimes finds a way to bring it back. On June 7, 2019, years after Luzinda's incident, Mabonga Christopher, a reporter with an online publication found a way to bring it back. 'As we are still in the aftermath of Martha Kay nude experience, we bring you some of Desire Luzinda's jaw dropping pictures that broke the internet,' he wrote. In the article, Mabonga did not only post again Luzinda's photos but described her as the 'pioneer of the nude industry in Uganda.'

Recovery

How then do survivors recover from such a horrendous experience? 'First, I had to accept that it had happened,' Luzinda said in the New Vision interview. 'That was a very big challenge. I got support from my family, friends and management team. I am also a very strong person and that is a trait I think I got from my mother. I was calm throughout, in spite of the hurt. It took me about four days to come to terms with what had happened. My family is very religious, very dignified people, but they understood and still loved me the same. They also understood that it was out of revenge (that someone leaked my photos). A lot was concocted about me and my family (but) my dad was very supportive. Around that time, we even attended a party together and he held my hand throughout.'

Luzinda also had to talk to her daughter about it. 'I discussed it with her dad.

“ ‘I have healed, I am stronger and I want to help someone else. I want to tell them “Be careful; see what happened to me. If that could happen to Joy, what about you, a young girl out there on social media? It is very dangerous. Talk to people before you make certain decisions. You can actually find love online, but...”’ Kihuguru stated in a June 2018 interview with Super Natural TV.

We realised that she was bound to hear about it from someone else and it would be distorted or exaggerated. We took her to a counsellor and broke the news to her. I needed her support so badly.'

On 29 May 2018, Heard told the Eagle, an online publication: 'In life we all have past experiences and it should not be used to define what we have become today.' She added, 'I can't stop devil's tongues but at least if I am to feed with them, I must use a long spoon.'

Kihuguru's Christian faith was the healing pillar she leant on. 'It is very important to have a relationship with Jesus Christ. Because of my relationship with Jesus, I ran to God (in prayer). I had my parents who were there for me...,' she told Pastor Mondo.

Advice

'I advise the women to, first of all, seek protection. It is also important to prove your innocence. In my case, I was lucky to have the police intervene. As a celebrity, chances that you will be misjudged are high, that's perhaps the price you pay for being in the limelight. To date, there are people who still think that I leaked my own pictures for popularity and, try as I may, there is nothing I can do about them. Try to live your life and pray. Nothing moves mountains like prayer. You need to pick up the pieces and face the situation,' Luzinda told the New Vision on 4 March 2015.

'I hope that people learn from my mistake and I hope that the fans forgive me. Someday, we'll forget the hurt, the reason we cried and who caused us pain. We will finally realise that the secret of being free is not revenge, but letting things unfold in their own way and own time. After all, what matters is not the first, but the last chapter of our life which shows how well we ran the race. So, smile, laugh, forgive, believe, and love all over again,' Sanyu Mweruka told the Big Eye on 5 February 2015.

'I have healed, I am stronger and I want to help someone else. I want to tell them "Be careful; see what happened to me. If that could happen to Joy, what about you, a young girl out there on social media? It is very dangerous. Talk to people before you make certain decisions. You can actually find love online, but..."' Kihuguru stated in a June 2018 interview with Super Natural TV.

HOW TO REPORT ONLINE VIOLENCE AND HARASSMENT

Arise Reporter

In July 2018, something unprecedented happened in Uganda. A 25-year-old student, Brian Isiko, was sentenced to two years in jail for cyber harassment by Buganda Road Court Magistrate, Gladys Kamasanyu.

This was after Isiko pleaded guilty to sexually harassing the Kabarole District Woman Member of Parliament, Sylvia Rwabwogo. According to the legislator, Isiko, then a student at YMCA, Jinja campus, started by sending her unsolicited love text messages and making repeated calls claiming undying love for her.

'I love you so much and want to

protect you. My love is for you alone and since there is no one taking care of you, I will do it,' read one of the messages sent to the MP. Besides being grounded in patriarchy – 'I want to protect you, no one is taking care of you, I will' – these were unsolicited persistent messages and a form of harassment of the legislator.

Rwabwogo took up the matter with the police at Parliament, which assigned a guard and advised her to set up an appointment to meet the stalker. The meeting was held on 11 June 2018 at Java House, Lugogo and Isiko showed up. It was where he was arrested.

It was after the intervention of the

police and later the courts of law that Rwabwogo got her peace back. Though thousands of women are victims of online violence, how many people report these cases to the police, and how can one do it anyway?

How do you report online harassment?

Bill Ndyamuhaki, the Deputy Assistant Superintendent of Police, a cybercrime investigator and forensic analyst with the Uganda Police Force, says that the process of registering OVAW is more or less the same as that of reporting other crimes. The offended party reports to the



nearest police station, where a case is registered and a reference number issued. Investigations commence and the person who reported the case is supposed to follow up on the investigations with the police or the police must keep her informed of the progress.

In case the police officer undermines, or does not understand or give due diligence to the matter being reported, Ndyamuhaki advises, one should seek someone higher in the police hierarchy, particularly the OC CID. He says almost all CID officers have a good understanding of OVAW and will, therefore, pay the necessary attention to the matter.

Why many cases remain unreported?

Deputy ASP Ndyamuhaki concedes that not many cases of online violence against women are reported to the police. 'We do register a few cases, but the biggest number of women suffer in silence,' he says. He attributes this to fear and ignorance. 'People just don't know how to go about it. Those who know do not want to come out and speak about it; they worry about how the community will perceive them because oftentimes they who report

are criticised, judged by the public despite being victims of violence,' Ndyamuhaki says.

Some people doubt the police's capacity to handle such cases, which notion Ndyamuhaki refutes as untrue. 'Those who report receive the help they need; we have followed up all these cases to the letter.'

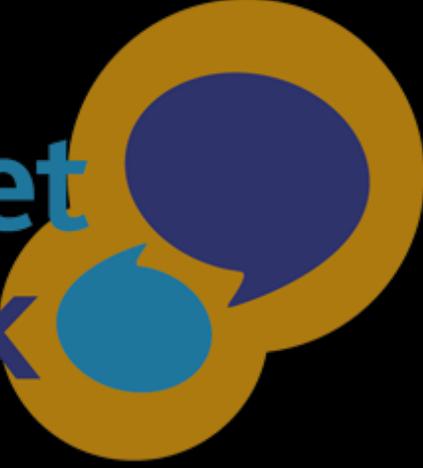
The challenge with cybercrime

Not all police stations handle cyber crime. It is a new phenomenon and not all police officers know the laws or have the capacity to handle online violence against women and girls due to its complexity and the technology around it.

'Cybercrime departments are mostly stationed at regional police stations such as Kampala Metropolitan Police stations, leaving a big chunk of the country uncovered, and because of this, people don't often report cases to the police because they know there is no one to handle their cases,' Ndyamuhaki says. He, however, says that the police are stepping up efforts by training and equipping officers with the information and skills necessary to handle cybercrime.

'We have a full department of electronic counter measures, which deals with technical investigations of cybercrimes, and these are skilled IT professionals, forensic experts, certified ethical hackers trained in Egypt, India, China. This is in addition to sensitising the public on cybercrime. October this year was for example, our cyber crime sensitisation month,' says Ndyamuhaki.

The other challenges are inadequate regulations governing online communications, government bureaucracy and the complexity of cybercrime. 'People disguise and use different identities, which complicates or makes it incredibly hard to apprehend perpetrators,' says Ndyamuhaki, further cautioning the public on the use of social media, and urging them to find a good balance between communication and the need to maintain a level of privacy.



HOW DO WE ENSURE DIGITAL SECURITY AND WOMEN'S ONLINE SAFETY?



PATRICIA NYASUNA,
Programme Officer, Gender and ICT, WOUGNET

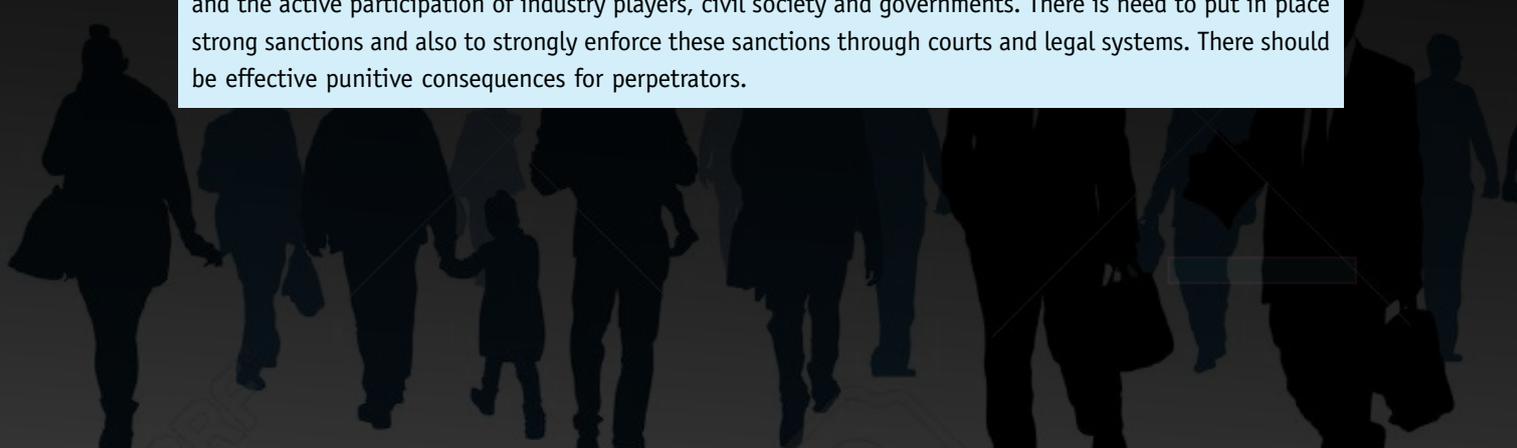
The powers that be should prioritise efforts to curb online violence against women. It is something lawmakers should know is happening and do something about it, and this should be reflected in the law and how these cases are handled. And this should not only be in the courts of law, but even at the lowest levels of administration such as Local Councils where women can access justice. It should also be part of the curriculum in schools. Students should be taught to be responsible citizens both offline and online. They should be taught that it is not right to take one's picture and share it without their consent, that it is not right to cyber harass anyone. Children should be taught from an early age about online violence against women. The impact of OVAW should be highlighted so that everyone is aware of its consequences. There is also need for support from the civil society organisations working on women's rights issues. If we are to win this war, and ensure that women and girls are free from online violence, there is need for a combined effort by everyone. Activists should come out strongly against OVAW.

STELLA BYARUHANGA,
Lecturer, Faculty of ICT, Makerere University

Industry players are important digital gatekeepers. They include internet service providers, mobile phone companies, social networking sites, online dating and gaming sites, website operators and software developers. Together with tech companies, they need to explicitly recognise cyber VAWG as unlawful behaviour, and demonstrate increased and expedited cooperation in providing relief to victims/survivors within the capacities that companies have. In particular, they can come up with better systems for cooperating with law enforcement, more effective takedown procedures for abusive and harmful content, a possibility of account termination for misconduct, and the production of transparency reports of records specific to cyber violence against women and girls, detailing how and when they have responded. Such interventions will go a long way in reducing online violence against women, henceforth ensuring their safety online. The repercussions should be severe, and any OVAW should be identified, with the space and freedom for the culprits reduced, women will once again enjoy their freedom online. Otherwise, without help from the industry players, it will be quite difficult to curb OVAW.

RACHEAL NAMANDE,
ICT Expert and Women Rights Activist

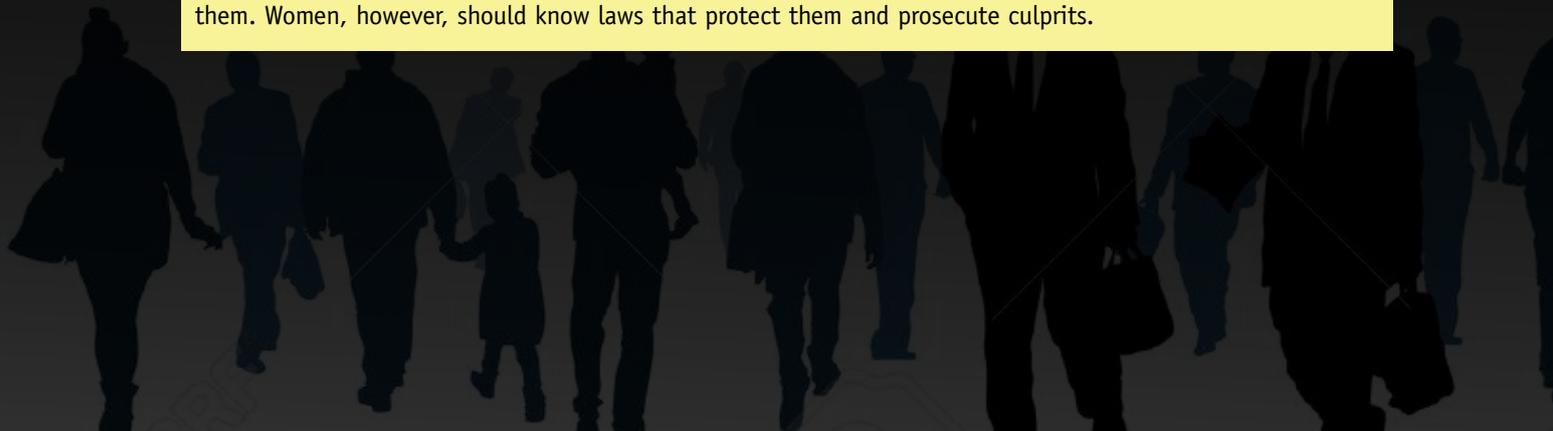
The only way to ensure the safety of girls and women online is through three best practices – that is sensitisation, safeguards and sanctions. Preventative measures through public sensitisation is important as changing social attitudes and norms is the first step to shifting the way online abuse is understood and the seriousness with which it is treated. A lot of OVAW is going on and people just don't give a damn because they don't understand it. The public and the law enforcement agencies such as the police need regular sensitisation about OVAW. Traditional violence against women safety frameworks include women's shelters, crisis centres, helplines and education. The digital world also requires safety measures to keep up with a rapidly evolving internet. Just like with traditional violence, digital safeguards require resources, attention and the active participation of industry players, civil society and governments. There is need to put in place strong sanctions and also to strongly enforce these sanctions through courts and legal systems. There should be effective punitive consequences for perpetrators.





SILVER MUHINDO,
ICT Support Engineer, Vision Group

People should not trust the internet; they should know that not everyone they communicate with is exactly who they think they are. There is a lot of pretence and trickery online. An online fraudster will, for example, inbox a victim and tell her that he has a package for her from the U.S. sent by a friend she studied with in primary school. But before she accesses the package, she has to pay \$ 500 to clear taxes. Interestingly, this person who never ordered the package and who neither expects it nor knows the sender, nor anyone else from the place where the package is coming from, pays the money. This kind of trust is difficult to understand! You should learn to verify the sources. Women should also avoid taking nudes. Besides risking having them leaked, the anti-pornography law, which deems it pornographic – which is a crime – will catch up with them. When women stop doing so, the people who take advantage of such situations by leaking them will have no chance of circulating them. Women, however, should know laws that protect them and prosecute culprits.



BOOK REVIEWS

**TITLE: HATERS: HARASSMENT, ABUSE,
AND VIOLENCE ONLINE**

AUTHOR: BAILEY POLAND

YEAR: 2016

**PUBLISHER: UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA
PRESS**

REVIEWER: BELINDA KYOMUHENDO



Cybersexism is one of the most serious problems facing the Internet today. A pervasive culture of online abuse, websites and social media architectures that enable it, and enduring sexist attitudes have created online spaces where cyber abuse is rampant.

The end result of this situation is that women feel alienated and unsafe in an environment that increasingly shapes media, politics, business, and everyday life. Ending the epidemic of online abuse aimed at women is of critical importance to a future that includes a functional Internet. The Internet is increasingly intertwined with everyday life, and remains an essential tool on a global scale therefore making it usable for women must be a higher priority for websites, ISPs, and web developers.

Bullying, stalking, and trolling are just the beginning. Extreme examples such as GamerGate get publicized, but otherwise the online abuse of women

is largely underreported. This book combines a history of online sexism with suggestions for solutions.

Using current events and the latest available research into online violence, Bailey Poland questions the motivations behind cybersexist activities and explores methods to reduce footprints of Internet misogyny, drawing parallels between online and offline abuse. By exploring the cases of Alyssa Funke, Rehtaeh Parsons, Audrie Pott, Zoe Quinn, Anita Sarkeesian, Brianna Wu, and others, and her personal experiences with sexism, Poland develops a compelling method of combating sexism online.

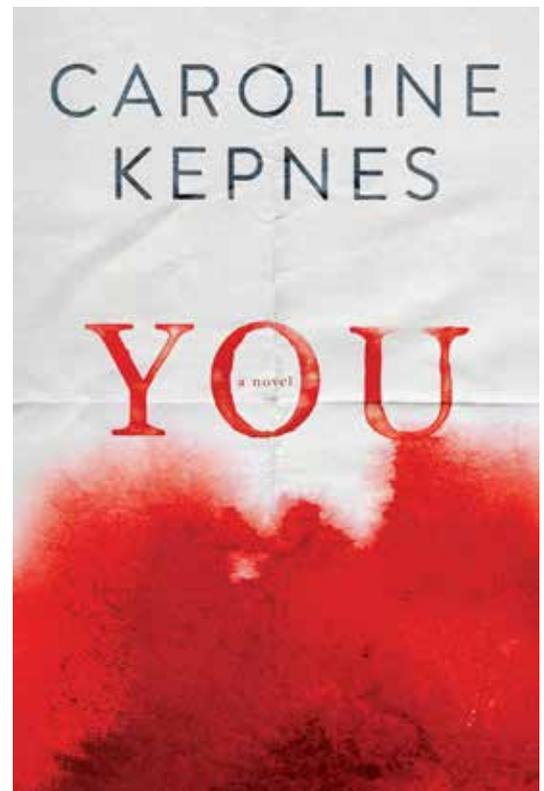
BOOK REVIEWS

TITLE: YOU

AUTHOR : CAROLINE KEPNES

PUBLISHER: AUGUST 28TH 2018
BY ATRIA/EMILY BESTLER BOOKS

REVIEWER: BELINDA KYOMUHENDO



Told from the perspective of Joe Goldberg, a seemingly normal bookstore employee, the narrative of this book is structured like a long monologue to the title “You”: a young woman, Guinevere Beck, who becomes the object of Joe’s obsessive affection. They meet casually enough at the bookstore, and since she’s an aspiring writer, they bond over literature.

This seems innocuous enough, even sweet, until we learn just how far Joe will go to make Beck his own. The author makes keen use of modern technology to chronicle Joe and Beck’s “courtship”. He not only stalks her on Twitter, but hacks into her email account and, after casually lifting her cellphone, monitors her text messages. From Beck’s constant stream of Twitter and Facebook updates, Joe learns all about her: her interests, her friends, her frequented bars and hangouts. He systematically stalks her and molds himself into her “dream man”—

nothing will stop him from having her to himself.

Joe worms his way into her life without her realizing the true extent of his devotion. Joe is not the upstanding boyfriend she thinks him to be, but a deeply disturbed stalker, obsessed with every aspect of Beck.

Told from Joe’s perspective, this novel is somewhat unsettling. All his twisted rationale makes perfect sense when read from his viewpoint. While you know as the reader that everything he is thinking and doing are both criminal and deeply wrong, you can’t help but get swept up in the narrative he is creating for himself. Joe happens to be a weirdly likeable guy despite being a stalker and murderer with no conscience.

The author does an amazing job confusing who you are rooting for by letting you get to know Joe as the hero

he thinks he is, despite showing you every horrible thing he is thinking.

You offers an interesting look at stalking in the digital age. Joe is able to commit his crimes through the use of email, Facebook and Twitter; finding out huge amounts of information about Beck without even leaving his house. It made me incredibly aware of how visible we all are these days and made me take a closer look at how much information we leave on the internet, and to make online safety a priority.



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