

WOMEN OF UGANDA NETWORK (WOUGNET) SECOND QUARTER 2025



April- June, 2025

Dear WOUGNET Community,

Welcome to the second edition of our Newsletter! This quarter was full of exciting milestones and collaborations as we continued our work in advancing digital rights for women and girls and shaping Uganda's digital future. From digital rights awareness campaigns to building capacities of local leaders, schools and business communities in Oyam District to enhancing digital inclusion in Northern Uganda, and collaborations during international events, we've been reflecting on our impact and in this edition, we bring you the highlights all in one place.

Thank you for being part of our community and supporting the mission of WOUGNET!

Warm Regards,
The WOUGNET Team

About WOUGNET

WOUGNET, a non-governmental organisation in Uganda, was founded in May 2000 as a result of a meeting among several women's organisations. Our core activities include research on the intersection of gender and technology, analysis of internet and ICT policies to ensure gender inclusivity, promotion of equitable access to information, capacity building on emerging tech and online safety, and advocacy to challenge oppressive patriarchal structures both online and offline.

Our Vision: We envision an inclusive and just society where women and girls can utilise ICTs for sustainable development.

Our Mission: WOUGNET's mission is to promote the use of ICTs by women and girls for gender equality and sustainable development.

Our Values: Teamwork, Gender sensitivity, Integrity, Excellence, Commitment, Passion, and Inclusiveness.

Strategic Objectives: Our key result areas for the period 2021 – 2025 encompass:

- Integration and enforcement of gender and rights in government ICT policy processes and programs.
- Ensuring women and girls have access to relevant information in urban and rural areas.
- Empowering communities to use ICTs and advocate for their digital rights.
- Establishing WOUGNET as a strong, vibrant, and sustainable centre of Gender and ICT excellence in Africa.

Key Highlights of the Second Quarter (April-June) 2025

EVENTS, WEBINAR AND CONFERENCES

Strengthening Feminist Responses to Emerging Threats

As part of our efforts to strengthen feminist responses to emerging threats, we successfully convened a Counter-Backlash Observatory Meeting on 25th April 2025. This strategic convening brought together key stakeholders to examine and respond to growing backlash trends, particularly those targeting feminist organizing and civic space online. The meeting generated valuable insights on policy, civic, and popular space dynamics, and featured both opening and closing remarks from staff members who also participated in the deliberations. Key contributions from observatory members were documented to further strengthen our research and advocacy around gendered backlash and resistance in Uganda.



Photos: Some of the observatory members during the Countering Backlash Observatory Meeting in Kampala

Enhancing Women's Rights to Freedom of Expression and Access to Information in Policy Making

On 30th May 2025, we convened policymakers, women-led civil society organizations, and media representatives during the first bi-annual National Dialogue under the Civil Society in Uganda Participation Program (CUSP), funded by the Commonwealth Foundation. The dialogue critically examined discriminatory laws affecting women's rights to Freedom of Expression and Access to Information. We engaged in in-depth discussions analyzing gaps within national, regional, and international legal frameworks that continue to undermine these fundamental rights. The session also focused on developing strategic recommendations to promote gender-inclusive policy formulation processes in Uganda and beyond. This collaborative effort reinforces our commitment to building a vibrant and resilient civil society that advances and protects women's rights.



Photos: Multistakeholders during the first Bi-annual National Dialogue in Kampala

Countering Backlash in the Digital and Civic Space

As part of our efforts to broaden public engagement on gender justice in digital spaces, WOUGNET facilitated a radio talk-show dedicated to countering online and offline backlash. The talkshow focused on raising awareness around gendered disinformation and other emerging backlash narratives that undermine feminist expression and civic engagement. Through an interactive discussion, listeners were equipped with practical digital security tips and encouraged to critically assess harmful narratives circulating both online and offline. The show also served as a strategic avenue to amplify findings from WOUGNET's ongoing Counter Backlash research project, extending its reach to a wider and more diverse audience.



Photo: From left to right, Carol Mukisa and Jordan Tumwesigye during the radio talkshow on Radio One in Kampala.

Leveraging Digital and Policy Spaces to Promote Women's Freedom of Expression

In its continued efforts to expand its public outreach efforts, WOUGNET hosted four radio talk shows in Kampala, Fort Portal, Jinja and Oyam districts focused on promoting women's freedom of expression and access to information under the CUSP. Broadcast in Luganda, Rutooro, Lusoga and Luo, the shows reached both rural and urban audiences, offering vital information on digital rights and women's legal entitlements to access information in the digital age. To extend their impact beyond the airwaves, the recorded shows were professionally edited and disseminated via YouTube and other social media platforms. These platforms amplified the campaign's reach, helping raise awareness among women and communities while reinforcing WOUGNET's role in advancing digital rights advocacy through inclusive and multilingual approaches.

Links:

[Kampala radio talkshow](#)

[Fort Portal talkshow](#)

[Jinja talkshow](#)



Photo: Speakers during the talkshow on Shine Fm in Oyam District

Localization of Content to Challenge Some of the Legal Frameworks on Access to Information and Freedom of Expression

Reaching both rural and urban audiences across Uganda, WOUGNET rolled out a radio campaign to broadcast legal empowerment spot messages on women's rights to freedom of expression and access to information. These messages were aired on strategically selected regional radio stations Capital FM (Central), Shine FM (Eastern), Life FM (Northern), Akaboozi FM (Kampala), and NBS FM (Western) ensuring wide geographic and demographic coverage. The initiative aimed to simplify legal concepts and raise public awareness of women's digital rights, especially among underserved communities with limited access to formal information sources. Through these broadcasts, WOUGNET advanced its goal of demystifying legal protections and empowering women with the knowledge needed to assert their rights both online and offline.



EDUCATION AND COLLABORATION

Our Voices Our Futures (OVOF) Consortium Global Partner Summit 2025

From April 2nd to 5th, 2025, WOUGNET participated in the Our Voices Our Futures (OVOF) Consortium Global Partner Summit held in Nairobi, Kenya. The summit brought together over 100 activists, organizers, and advocates from structurally silenced womxn communities across the Global South. This gathering provided a platform for sharing experiences, celebrating achievements, and strategizing for collective action towards amplifying marginalized voices. WOUGNET was honored to present on a panel titled "Power of Voice", where we shared insights and reflections on five years of impactful work under the OVOF program. The panel highlighted WOUGNET's efforts in combating gendered disinformation, promoting digital rights, and creating safe online spaces for women in Uganda. Participation in the summit strengthened WOUGNET's partnerships, expanded our advocacy networks, and affirmed our commitment to working alongside diverse global movements pushing for justice, rights, and inclusion. The experience emphasized the power of storytelling, digital advocacy, and solidarity in challenging systemic inequalities and empowering womxn communities globally.



Photo: Our Technical Support Officer during the panel discussion at the Partners Summit in Kenya, Nairobi

Enhancing Information Access Through Innovation



Photos: WOUGNET staff showcasing the OGBV knowledge access portal and comic book at the Uganda Innovation Week

In commemoration of the Uganda Innovation Week, our Technical Support Officer and Communications Associate exhibited bold ideas and impact of WOUGNET's digital innovations i.e. OGBV knowledge access and services portal, an interactive platform that provides secure reporting mechanisms, information, legal, psychosocial and technical services for victims and survivors. Advocacy Comic Book: A creative tool used to raise awareness about digital

digital rights, online safety, and GBV in a relatable and accessible format, and a comic book "Juliet's Journey from Silence to Connection" that aims to create safer communities for women and girls in digital spaces.

These innovations demonstrated WOUGNET's commitment to using ICTs creatively to address gender-specific challenges, generating interest and engagement from various stakeholders including technologists, policymakers, and civil society actors.



Enhancing Digital Inclusion to Promote Connectivity and Inclusion in Uganda

With support from the Internet Society Foundation, WOUGNET implemented an inception meeting in Oyam district under the Enhancing Digital Inclusion in Northern Uganda, Oyam District: Piloting a Rural Broadband Connectivity Model. The meeting brought together local leaders, women-led civil society organizations, media, and community members to introduce the project and galvanize collective support. The initiative specifically aims to increase digital access and literacy for women and girls in rural Oyam, recognizing that digital inclusion is not just about infrastructure, it is a matter of gender justice, equity, and empowerment. Through the establishment of Digital Empowerment Centers, tailored digital skills training, and a community-led connectivity model, the project seeks to ensure that women and girls are equipped to meaningfully participate in and shape the digital future of their communities.



Photo: Community leaders and members during the inception meeting in OYAM under the BOLT Project

WOUGNET at DRIF 2025

Between April 29 and May 2, 2025, WOUGNET actively participated in the 12th edition of the Digital Rights and Inclusion Forum (DRIF) in Lusaka, Zambia, under the theme “Promoting Digital Ubuntu in Approaches to Technology.” As one of Africa’s most prominent convenings on digital rights, DRIF provided a strategic platform for WOUGNET to amplify feminist and intersectional perspectives on issues ranging from gendered disinformation and digital inclusion to online gender-based violence and shrinking civic space. WOUGNET hosted and contributed to six key sessions throughout the week. These included our own high-level panel “Reclaiming Gender Justice in the Digital Age,” where we shared insights from our Countering Backlash programme and research, and a regional policy dialogue on “Legal Frameworks Regulating Gendered Disinformation in Africa,” co-hosted with the Association for Progressive Communications (APC). WOUGNET also took part in the launch of the 2025 State of Digital Rights in Zambia report, contributing reflections on cross-border digital rights challenges and opportunities. In the session “Harmonising Efforts: A Roadmap for Effective OGBV Prevention and Response in Africa,” we spotlighted policy gaps and barriers faced by marginalised women, including those with disabilities and from queer communities. Additionally, our participation in “East and West: Advancing Inclusive ICT Policies in Africa” and “Internet, Social Media and Cultural Dominance” reinforced the need for more accessible, culturally inclusive, and equitable digital spaces. WOUGNET’s engagements at DRIF 2025 not only expanded its regional advocacy footprint but also cemented its role as a key actor in shaping people-centered, rights-respecting digital futures in Africa.



Photo: Our Program Officer, Peter Ongom during one of the panel discussions at DRIF 2025 in Zambia, Lusaka

Convening on strengthening civil society engagement with the Maputo Protocol.

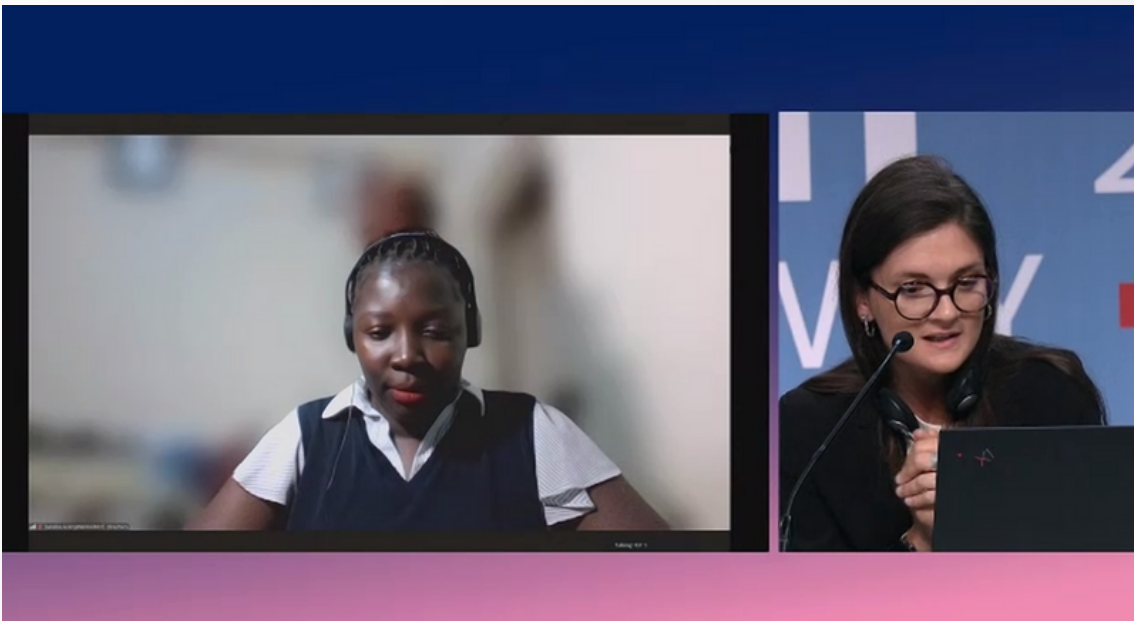


Demonstrating our commitment to regional gender advocacy, WOUGNET took part in a strategic convening organised by the University of Pretoria focused on strengthening civil society engagement with the Maputo Protocol. During the discussions, WOUGNET contributed perspectives on the intersection between the Protocol's provisions and the digital rights of women and girls highlighting the growing relevance of technology in the realization of gender equality which further position WOUGNET as a thought leader at the nexus of gender, rights, and technology in Africa.

Photo: One of the facilitators during the convening held in Kampala

WOUGNET at IGF 2025: Advancing Justice for Victims of Cybercrime and Online Harms

WOUGNET participated in the Internet Governance Forum (IGF) 2025, contributing to Open Forum #39 on "From Research to Action: Cybercrime & Justice in Africa", co-hosted by UNICRI and ALT Advisory on 26th June. The session explored practical strategies to address cybercrime and ensure justice for victims, with a focus on women and marginalized groups. Our Executive Director, Sandra Aceng highlighted the gendered barriers victims face in reporting tech-facilitated gender-based violence (TFGBV) in Uganda. She shared real-life cases from WOUGNET's work, underscoring the urgent need for survivor-centred responses to support victims of cybercrime and online harms particularly women and marginalized groups. These actionable measures, include enacting gender-sensitive laws that address online harms such as deepfakes and cyber harassment, and training law enforcement and judicial officers to respond effectively to digital justice issues. Other survivor support services she highlighted includes WOUGNET's OGBV Portal and toll-free helpline, digital literacy and rights awareness through community outreach and education.



The Uganda Internet Governance Forum (UIGF) 2025

Our Communications Associate, Irene Marunga attended the Uganda Internet Governance Forum (UIGF) during the launch of the Uganda Parliamentary IGF, held under the theme “Building Uganda’s Digital Governance Together” joining stakeholders from across civil society, government, and the private sector. The forum focused on shaping inclusive digital governance in Uganda, with an emphasis on promoting digital rights and addressing online violence. We continue to follow and engage with national conversations that impact structurally silenced communities navigating digital spaces.



Understanding the Intersessional Work of the Internet Governance Forum

The representation and participation of grassroots voices, particularly women human rights defenders (WHRDs), feminists, and national policymakers remain limited in the intersessional work of the IGF, including the Best Practice Forum (BPF) on Gender and Access, the Gender Dynamic Coalition, and other human rights-focused initiatives that provides critical spaces for advancing gender justice and digital rights.

Under the Our Voices Our Voices project, we convened women human rights defenders, feminists, and government representatives for a two-days capacity building workshop to meaningfully engage in the IGF's intersessional processes and shape inclusive digital policy. Participants were equipped with practical knowledge on how the internet works (infrastructure and protocols), Internet governance frameworks and responsible institutions, and the role of marginalized groups in shaping internet policies. The workshop enhanced participants' understanding of digital ecosystems and empowered them to advocate for inclusive internet governance.



Photos: Participants during the capacity building workshop

Reclaiming Gender Justice in the Digital Age

The progress made in advancing gender equality is increasingly under threat. Across the globe, feminist activists, gender justice movements, and women-led organizations are facing a resurgence of regressive forces. This backlash is rooted in political, religious, and socio-cultural shifts that seek to reinforce patriarchal norms, suppress women's voices, and curtail hard-won rights. This backlash manifests in various forms including gender-based online violence, censorship of feminist discourse, digital surveillance targeting women's rights defenders and disinformation campaigns aiming at undermining women's leadership.

Read more [here](#) to find out how we can continue to challenge harmful narratives and promote digital equity, accountability, and gender justice for all.

Empowering Africa's Digital Future Through Inclusive Connectivity

As technology continues to expand its reach across the continent, critical issues around digital rights, inclusion, and accountability have become increasingly urgent. The persistent infrastructure barriers in remote areas, lack of digital skills, awareness to meaningfully engage online among marginalised women, persons with disabilities, and other vulnerable groups face additional challenges, including online gender-based violence, digital safety concerns, and a lack of assistive technologies have greatly contributed to the gender digital divide. Therefore, there is a need for localized, multi-stakeholder policymaking processes that center community voices and experiences.

Find out more about these challenges, their impacts and the way forward for enhancing Africa's digital future in our [blog](#).

Unpacking the Impact of Digital Surveillance Tools in the Civic Space

WOUGNET's latest blog post explores the hidden risks of social media tracking and how it exacerbates widespread digital surveillance. From shadow profiles and metadata collection to third-party tracking and behavioral profiling, this blog highlights how our online presence, especially for women and marginalized groups is being constantly monitored, often without our knowledge.

The blog also highlights the gaps in Uganda's legal protections and shares practical tips for safeguarding your digital privacy.

[Read more](#)

Her Media Diary: Advocating for a Free, Open, and Secure Internet for Women

WOUGNET's Executive Director, Sandra Aceng was featured on Episode 44 of the Her Media Diary podcast, where she shared powerful insights on the urgent need for a free, open, and secure internet, especially for women and marginalized communities in Uganda and beyond. The podcast emphasises what digital freedom means for women's rights, inclusion, and empowerment in an increasingly online world.

In this episode, Sandra discusses:

- The gendered impact of internet shutdowns and digital repression,
- WOUGNET's advocacy for inclusive digital rights and online safety,
- The intersection of technology, gender, and civic space,
- Practical strategies for empowering women through digital literacy and policy reform.

Listen to the full episode:

- Her Media Diary Website: <https://hermediadiary.com/her-media-diary-episode-44-open-free-secure-internet-for-women-with-sandra-aceng/>
- Apple Podcasts: <https://podcasts.apple.com/gb/podcast/her-media-diary-episode-44-open-free-secure-internet/id1549480567?i=1000715258114>

Host
Prof Yemis Akinbobola
CEO AWIM

Guest
Sandra Aceng
(Executive Director, Women of Ugandan Network (WOUGNET))

OPEN, FREE & SECURE INTERNET FOR WOMEN

44
EPISODE

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Upholding Our Core Values

As we conclude the second quarter, Women of Uganda Network (WOUGNET) celebrates the impactful strides made towards advancing women's digital rights and inclusion. From policy advocacy and collaborative discussions, we have seen sustainable growth in our collective effort to promote the use of ICTs by women and girls for gender equality and sustainable development. This quarter's achievements highlight the power of collaboration, knowledge sharing, and amplifying women's voices in the digital space.

Let's continue to inspire, innovate, and lead as we move toward a more inclusive future. Stay tuned for more exciting initiatives in the months ahead!

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