



MAGAZINE

2021

A publication of the Uganda Communications Commission



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From The EDITORIAL TEAM



Rebecca Mukite



James Tumusiime



Audrey Kukundakwe

Dear Reader!

Welcome to the Uganda Communications Commission Year in Review Catalogue 2021.

The year 2021 saw no let-up in the COVID-19 onslaught that was unleashed on Uganda at the beginning of 2020. The subsequent impact of the pandemic on individuals, households, careers, and businesses goes without saying. But so does humanity's knack for rising above adversity.

The Commission stood tall, and in the end registered some of its most notable feats during this tumultuous period.

It was the year the Commission got a new board, after a seven-month hiatus. The new board came against the backdrop of new faces joining the top echelons of the ICT sector - new ministers, a new Permanent Secretary, a new ICT Committee in Parliament.

It was the year MTN Uganda listed on the Uganda Securities Exchange (USE), in line with their new National Telecommunication Operator (NTO) license that was obtained in 2020.

It was the year Uganda held "scientific" campaigns in which the Commission was called upon to play an active role as the regulator of the media space that took centre stage in that electoral process.

It was also the year in which the Commission lost one of its longest serving staff members, Simon Bugaba!

Inside these pages you will find a compressed menu of what transpired during the year, including some of the events highlighted above. One item you can't afford to miss is the cover story, our interview with the Ag. Executive Director. Irene Kaggwa Sewankambo's unplugged style will leave you informed, inspired, and challenged.

The PR Team is grateful to the Ag. ED, Director Corporate Affairs and TMT for making this publication possible.

Special thanks to colleagues who spared time to contribute stories.

Read on!

From The **DIRECTOR** **CORPORATE AFFAIRS**



Dear Esteemed Readers,

I am pleased to welcome you to this edition of UCC Magazine.

One of the key functions of the Department of Corporate Affairs (DCA) is to coordinate the smooth flow of information between the Commission and its internal and external stakeholders.

The UCC Magazine is one of the platforms through which this mandate is exercised, in line with the Corporate Communications Policy.

Through this publication, DCA aims to provide a reliable record of the Commission's annual highlights in both print and electronic formats, while adding variety to our annual corporate content.

In this edition, we take stock of the key events and developments that transpired in the communications sector over the past year, including hits and misses, opportunities, and challenges.

Be sure to enjoy a Q&A interview with the Ag. Executive Director, articles on our new board, and new ministers, and the state of the film industry amid COVID-19 challenges, among other tantalising reads.

I thank the Editorial Team for the effort that has birthed this publication, and the ED and Top Management (TMT) for the unwavering support.

FRED OTUNNU

ED Speaks Out ON WORK, LIFE



Ms Irene Kaggwa Sewankambo was appointed Ag. Executive Director of Uganda Communications Commission in February, 2020. The ED shared with the Public Relations Team her rollercoaster experience – from COVID-19 to 'scientific' elections to NTO licenses, among other highlights.

Thank you very much ED for finding time to talk to us.

That is my duty. I'm supposed to have time for all of you.

Q: *The year 2021 was your first full year occupying what is widely considered to be the 'hot seat'. What can you tell us about your experience so far?*

A: It is a hot seat. But it has been an interesting journey, one of learning new things, of self-discovery, of discovering [other] people, and of getting another perspective about the people that I work with. I don't know whether to say I was fortunate or unfortunate to have the hot issues happening during that period. COVID-19! It came in such a unique manner that we were all on a blank slate.

Then the first scientific/hybrid campaigns and elections in Uganda. Another opportunity but also a challenge. At the end of the day, we did our part in ensuring the success of the electoral process.

We also switched to a new licensing regime. We've managed to establish an engagement where stakeholder collaboration is not just a cliché but where we can respectfully consult and engage.

Q: *In that rollercoaster experience, what would you say were the highest and lowest moments?*

A: The lowest that still hits me today was the loss of Simon Bugaba (the former Head of Estates and Administration died in June 2021). Having found him here, he was very much a part of what UCC has become. And the way we lost him, it was so fast, we didn't see it coming. Yes, it's never easy even if you know that somebody is sick, but it's even harder when I saw you yesterday and today you are gone.

As for the highs, I think we have, as a team, managed to come out more, and people know us less about [enforcement]. Now, you get feedback from people who tell you, "Hmm, I didn't know you guys do that!" Or "You managed to do this well." We also celebrate managing to close the prolonged discussion with MTN Uganda.

And we managed to do all this during lockdown.

Q: *Looking back at your family life, early childhood, and school, can you point to one or two lessons that could have prepared you for this life of responsibility?*

A: That's a good question. Looking back, I feel like life put different people and opportunities in my pathway. And the saying that everybody comes into your life for a reason seems apparent. A friend was telling me recently that one of the best ways to teach a child how to swim is to push them into the pool (don't try it!). You end up learning to swim for survival.

I come from a family, where I was allowed to be open. Even the schools I went to were all about, "You can do it." And I've had this whole journey with people around me who would tell me just that.

Also, I had a fair share of women in my family background that were very strong in their fields, undeterred by their being women. Don't look at your gender. It is not an excuse. Of course, you had all the stereotyping, "But you're a woman, but you are this, you are that." Don't focus on that.

So, you realise that all those things were moulding you for what is to come. At one point you even wonder if you have a thick enough skin. Then you realise, "Okay, I haven't yet died." The lesson is,

"I come from a family, where I was allowed to be open. Even the schools I went to were all about, "You can do it." And I've had this whole journey with people around me who would tell me just that."

and that is what I keep telling my children – life is a continuous journey of learning. It is all about our choices and attitude. The attitude you have towards what life throws at you. Are you going to feel sorry for yourself and mourn about it? Or are you going to say, "Ok, life has thrown at me these lemons, how do I make lemonade out of them?" As I always say, one of my principles is the Serenity prayer:

God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference.

Q: *What can you tell young people, especially girls, who admire you but have no idea what they need to do to break through that proverbial glass ceiling?*

A: One, the men are not our enemies. A key issue that keeps coming up is that not every man is open to accepting female companions and leaders. Not everybody. But a lot of the time you earn it. It's hard to require respect. I must show you that I'm worthy of being your companion or your leader. When you are given an opportunity, give it your all, don't work for the sake of it. Rather look at it as an opportunity to put your mark on it.

Every individual needs to find what their strength and/or passion is. It is also important to draw out personal values. What is it you are willing to compromise on in terms of your values, and what is a no-go? What is it that you are passionate about? And as parents, how do we help our children to appreciate and reflect on what defines them? Ultimately, your *ambitions, values, choices, and attitudes* are critical in shaping how you will navigate your life and career journey.



Q: *Certainly, one of the milestones registered under your watch has been the signing of the new NTO licences. But what does the new licencing framework mean for a Ugandan struggling with the cost of broadband?*

A: Very good question. Now, the first NTOs that were granted in 1998 and 2000 looked at the socio-economic objectives of the

time. I think there were around 50,000 phone lines across the whole country. That time the need was to have more people enjoy voice communication.

Now, we have moved on. You can no longer boast that people have access to voice communication. It's broadband. And broadband, not in the context of you and me who are already privileged to have it at work, but, as COVID-19 has demonstrated, it is now about access for all.

During lockdown, people were being advised, "Don't go to the hospital; stay at home." Or use the relevant apps. How do you get the right information to these people? Broadband has demonstrated its transformative ability to facilitate social service delivery and thus improve the standard of living of individuals.

Therefore, we are licencing NTOs to come in and complement the efforts of Government in terms of improving the lives of our citizens.

coverage of the entire territory of Uganda. And we have had questions such as, “Even in the forests, on the lakes?” Looking at some of the accidents that happen on Lake Victoria, for example, how many of those could have been mitigated or at least rescue efforts boosted if there was coverage?

Besides, with Fourth Industrial Revolution technology, for example, drones can be used for surveillance to counter smuggling, livestock monitoring, monitoring of oil pipelines, etc. Some of these areas may not be inhabited by people. But we have an opportunity to leapfrog [some stages of development] where others needed to first set up the infrastructure. Technology is giving us options in terms of wireless, satellite.

Now, the other aspect that we look at in the NTOs is to give the consumer a choice. I shouldn't say, “Only company A is in this place so that's the only option I have to use irrespective of their terms and conditions.” I should be able to say, “I can choose A, B or even C.” We want to make sure that, ultimately, the consumer is king.

Q: COVID-19 has forced us to adopt some practices that would otherwise have taken longer to take root, including remote working, e-commerce, and e-learning. Do you foresee a return to the “old normal”?

A: As far as the industry is concerned, we used to take almost 10 years between generations of technologies. Looking at mobile technology, for example, it took almost 10 years between 1G (which we never had

in Uganda) and 2G, then 2G and 3G. But now we already have the conversation on 6G even before 5G has been fully rolled out.

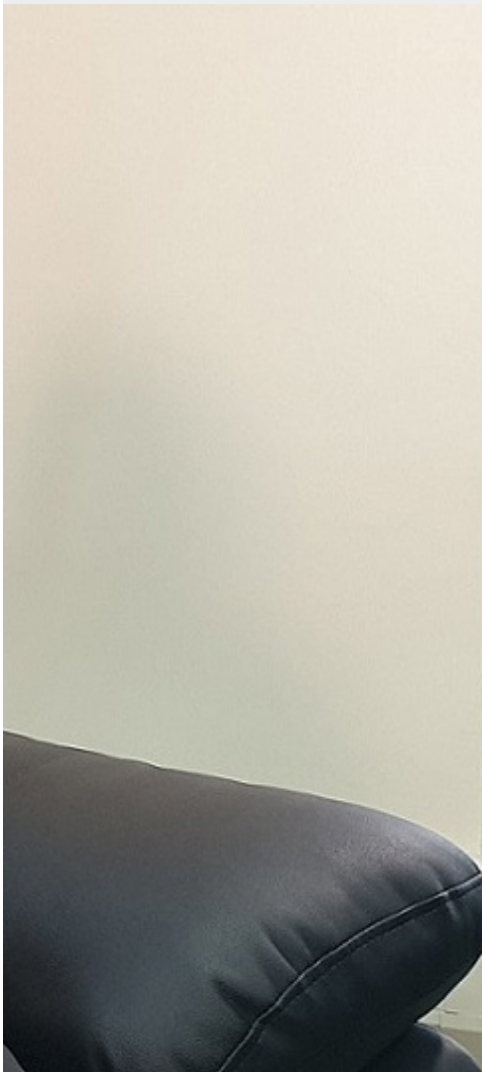
The industry is continuously looking for new use cases and new opportunities for innovation in the different sectors because it is apparent that adoption is driven by relevance.

Many people did not even know how to work remotely. We now see more flexibility in terms of different packages to facilitate working-at-home. The operators are saying, “Tell us where the complaints are coming from, and we follow up.” You feel that they are more responsive.

Globally, there is debate as to whether we will ever go back to the old order. Most likely we are going to see an increased hybrid situation. Do I need to see every employee to get her output? It's increasingly about how to get the productivity, it's not about the physical. And that is going to have a spiral effect on other areas.

Q: You're one of the first people to report to work in the morning and one of the last to leave. How do you manage to maintain a reasonable work-life balance amidst such a hectic schedule?

One thing I realised during lockdown is that you work more at home than at office, where you spend an hour or two of transit. At home you wake up, get to your machine, and start working. And because you have no wardrobe issues to worry about- you can pump up the top part only when you have a meeting - you have more work hours in a day. So, one of my children commented



We receive letters from, for example, Members of Parliament, complaining about poor coverage in their areas. For voice communication, we now rank very high in terms of the percentage of the population that is covered. However, data [communication] is still very low. 3G, fair; 4G, not so much, and in some cases not at all! There are still parts of Uganda that are completely blank in terms of broadband coverage.

So, what the licence sought to address is 90% geographical

one time, “You wake up in the morning, she’s working; you go to sleep, she’s working...” That is when I realised how hard I was working. So, how do you balance this?” We created play time as a family. Then we also have the shared experience where everybody talks about what has transpired in their day. The other thing we do is physical activity, which is fun. However, we often talk about work-life balance, but we forget about me-time, where I’m not a mother, I’m not a boss, I’m not a daughter. It’s just me. So, yes, you must find me time and do what you enjoy most, what gets you relaxed; be it a glass of wine or something else, treat yourself!

Q: *Let’s also talk about your trim appearance. Can you share some tips on how you maintain that? What’s your favourite dish? Do you eat out? Do you work out?*

A: I always promise myself, “I’m going to do gym”. But gym is such a discipline, my God! Now, with COVID-19, you must find what hour of the day you go, then by the time you get through the traffic jam you are tired...” So, I’ve resorted to fun exercises with my children and my family. That works for me because it’s uniting and entertaining; it’s both play and work-out in the process. I won’t lie that I’ve tried the rope [either]. You do it for a time, and somehow unless it builds into the comfort of your routine, it becomes difficult.

Then a friend of mine Liz introduced us to juice. At first, I was like, vegetable juice! But she gave us a challenge and we started it. Now, every day, I have a different vegetable juice. Every day! Then, of course, I have my favourite dish. I’m very

traditional in my favourite dish, and everyone keeps laughing. It’s not about the chicken or meat; it’s groundnuts and matooke. Well prepared. I don’t want it burnt. If you give me that, you can leave all the other dishes, it’s alright. But I wish I could say that I am very disciplined. I also have my junk one. Whenever I travel, I give myself a treat. Then I get the satisfaction of, “it is bad for my health, but yes, the cheating has been done, move on!”

Q: *Are there leaders in the sector that you look up to as role models?*

A: I’ve had the honour of working under different and interesting people. And everyone has a good side and bad side. It is you to choose what you learn from them. Dr Francis Tsubira and I have had very good relations, and he’s been a strong pillar in my journey. Then Mr Patrick Masambu, being the first CEO of UCC, and the working relationship we had, there are many things I learnt from him. I also had the honour of working with John Nasasira (former ICT minister). This is a man who would sit, read through, and edit reports to the point of asking, “But this is the same text here and there; were you guys just lazy?” So, working with him was a very good experience. Even when we would travel, he would be like, “For every meeting you set up, get to know what they want in advance, who I’m going to meet, and give me their profile.” He always wanted to be prepared. That was a strength that I felt was commendable and worth picking up.

Q: *Lastly, what are your interests or hobbies outside work? How do you spend your downtime?*

A: These hobbies know how to change along with the years. There was a time I was into movies and novels. Now, I won’t read a novel and fail to find time for my children, for example. So that reality shapes what becomes a hobby in the now. I enjoy time with my girls. They are such a pillar. There are times when you need people who know you, who understand you, and who keep encouraging you. You need that circle of friends that can tell you, “You’re being fake” or “Go girl, that is it”, or when everybody is telling you, “You’re horrible, how can you do that,” they are like, “Yes, it might not be popular, but those are the values we stand for.”

Q: *And your last word?*

A: To staff, don’t look to others to grow you, you also have a role to play. You need to find that self-actualisation so that at the end of the day, you don’t wake up in the morning and say, “I have to go to work.” There are times when we must tell ourselves bluntly, “Maybe that job is no longer for me.” To know when to walk away, to know when to voice your concerns, to know when to build yourself. Don’t wait for anybody to do it for you.

I recently shared a post, “You never know who is watching.” That might be the person that springs you forward. Therefore, always do everything to the best of your ability. The one time you have done it shoddily might be when that person is watching.

Thank you so much.

A pleasure!



Veteran actress Sarah Sentongo Kisawuzi receives the Lifetime Achievement Award from UCUSAF Director Nyombi Thembo during the Uganda Film Festival 2021 gala.

UCC Gets NEW BOARD



Standing L-R: Geoffrey Agoi, Paul Odoi, Edson Ngirabakunzi, Enoch Barata, Jimmy Pat Saamanya, Irene Kaggwa Sewankambo
Seated L-R: Dorothy Okello, Chris Baryomunsi, Godfrey Kabbyanga, Aminah Zawedde

After six months without a board, and following what he described as a “rigorous process”, Hon. Chris Baryomunsi assembled and unveiled a new Board comprising – in his words - high calibre, high profile, eminent persons.

The leadership of the Ministry of ICT & National Guidance was unanimous in its pledge to support the new board as it steers UCC through its journey towards an inclusive digital economy.

“We as the ministry shall give you all the support you need so that you can do your work of providing oversight over UCC,” Dr Chris Baryomunsi said

during the board members’ swearing-in ceremony and inauguration in September.

The minister who described the Board as “high calibre” among other superlatives, was flanked by his colleagues, the Minister of State Godfrey Kabbyanga, and the Permanent Secretary, Dr Aminah Zawedde.

The new board is a mixture of re-appointed members such as Dr Dorothy Kabagaju Okello (Chairperson), Dr Jimmy Pat Saamanya and Enoch Barata, as well as new faces such as Ms Lucy Ntabazi, Mr Edson Ngirabakunzi, Eng. Paul Odoi and Eng. Geoffrey Agoi. Ag. Executive Director Irene Kaggwa Sewankambo is a member by virtue of her position.

Hon Baryomunsi thanked the outgoing board members as well as the UCC management for the

work they have put in to make the agency one of the most recognisable brands across the country.

Recalling his first visit to UCC in his new position earlier, the minister said his team had been “impressed by what we saw”, singling out the arrangements and technologies put in place to facilitate regulation of the communications sector.

The minister, however, noted that UCC’s work is well cut out, with communication and media space in dire need of effective regulation.

“The technology enables communication, but we also have individuals who misuse it,” Baryomunsi said, citing abuses and fake news on social media, among others.

Dr Okello, who is also Dean of the School of Engineering at Makerere University, said UCC has a great mission to drive the development of a modern communications sector, adding that she is honoured to be part of that agenda.

“I want to commit on behalf of the board that we will continue on the EPIC journey,” she said, in reference to the Commission’s corporate values – “Excellence, Professionalism, Integrity and Commitment.”

On his part, Hon Kabbyanga called on the new board to support the Ag. Executive Director.

“You must support ED to do her work as a board. We shall also support you to support her,” the minister said, adding that the new ministry leadership had taken note of UCC “doing very well.”

Under Section 9 of the Uganda Communications Act 2013, the Board of the Commission must include a person with experience and knowledge in telecommunications, broadcasting or postal communications, who shall also be the chairperson.

The board must also include a representative of professional engineers recommended by the Uganda Institution of Professional Engineers; a prominent lawyer who is a member of the Uganda Law Society; a person knowledgeable in the field of economics, financial management and public administration; a representative of the ministry responsible for information and communications technology; the Executive Director; a representative of consumers recommended by the Uganda Consumers Association; and one eminent person of good repute and proven integrity representing the public.

The Act further stipulates that a member of the board shall hold office for three years and shall be eligible for reappointment for only one further term.



Board Chairperson Dr Dorothy Okello

RCDF To UCUSAF: CONSOLIDATING GAINS, EYEING NEW FRONTIERS



Uganda Communications Commission has rebranded the Rural Communications Development Fund (RCDF) and renamed it Uganda Communications Universal Services and Access Fund (UCUSAF) to refocus interventions on all underserved and unserved areas of Uganda. UCUSAF Director NYOMBI THEMBO expounds the RCDF to UCUSAF journey:

For the last four and a half years we have been implementing UCUSAF III by focusing on three main interventions - enhancing broadband access to the underserved and unserved communities; content mediation; and research and advocacy.

we have gone a long way in doing that in as far as our budget can allow, especially our flagship project of taking broadband to schools, where we can comfortably say today that 80-85% of Government schools is covered. All the computer labs that we are putting up, immediately we set up the infrastructure, we follow it up with internet access.

We have gone a long way in digital literacy, training more than 5,000 people, and we don't only talk about training but also introducing the online transaction culture to them.

Most of these people we train, the first time we interact with them, they don't have an email address. When you don't have an email address, you won't do anything online.

We are now going into devices. We are piloting how we can give devices to those extremely poor people in our communities. If it's successful, we hope every year we should be able to give content-ready devices to close to 4,000 households for the next five years, which to us is a phenomenal thing when you talk of broadband.

On content, we are continuing to connect schools to science content, which has done amazing things in covering the gap between rural and urban schools in the [academic] performance of science. The reports we get from the beneficiaries are encouraging. This year we are going to restart building towers in underserved areas; we are doing about 32. Last year but one we did 22 upgrades, so there will be about 50 towers. Then in [subsequent] years we shall continue trying to cover those gaps - trying to create Wifi hotspots, to give people that experience of online transactions in rural growth centres. We started in UCUSAF I by putting internet points of presence at district headquarters but now we are going beyond that to make sure that we identify rural growth centres that are underserved and give people some hotspots where they can do online transactions.

As we come to the end of our five-year policy period next year, we are already in the process of developing a strategic plan for the next five years (2022-2027).

During that period, we shall go into other fundamental areas such as agriculture. We have already made a study, an ICT gaps study in agriculture, and we are collaborating with some in academia to see what kind of support we should provide.

We have already collaborated with the Uganda National Farmers Federation (UNFFE), again to do digital skilling to selected farmer groups and we are going to scale this up because we know that agriculture is fundamental to our development as a country.

We are looking at tourism too. This year we are going to start a conversation with Uganda Wildlife Authority to see how we can go into national parks because some of the towers we are putting up need to get in there. The tourist of today is one who sees a lion and immediately wants to virtually transport their family back home to the park to share the experience together, and you can only do that when you have robust and ubiquitous connectivity in the parks.

Yet when you look at our connectivity map, there is no connectivity in the national parks, and we know that our parks are attractive for those foreign guests to get the real Uganda experience.

Of course, we'll not get our eyes off the prize of connectivity because that is the road that connects everything that we do. Whatever good ideas you may have regarding ICTs, without connectivity it is lost.

When connectivity is there and the content is not good, not relevant, or appropriate, you have lost it. When the connectivity is right, but you don't have the [right] devices, the so-called last inch connectivity, again you have lost it. And then literacy; you can have the three - connectivity, content, devices - but what about literacy? Are people able to manipulate these devices to get this content and exploit the benefits of this connectivity? When they don't have that basic literacy, you are wasting time.

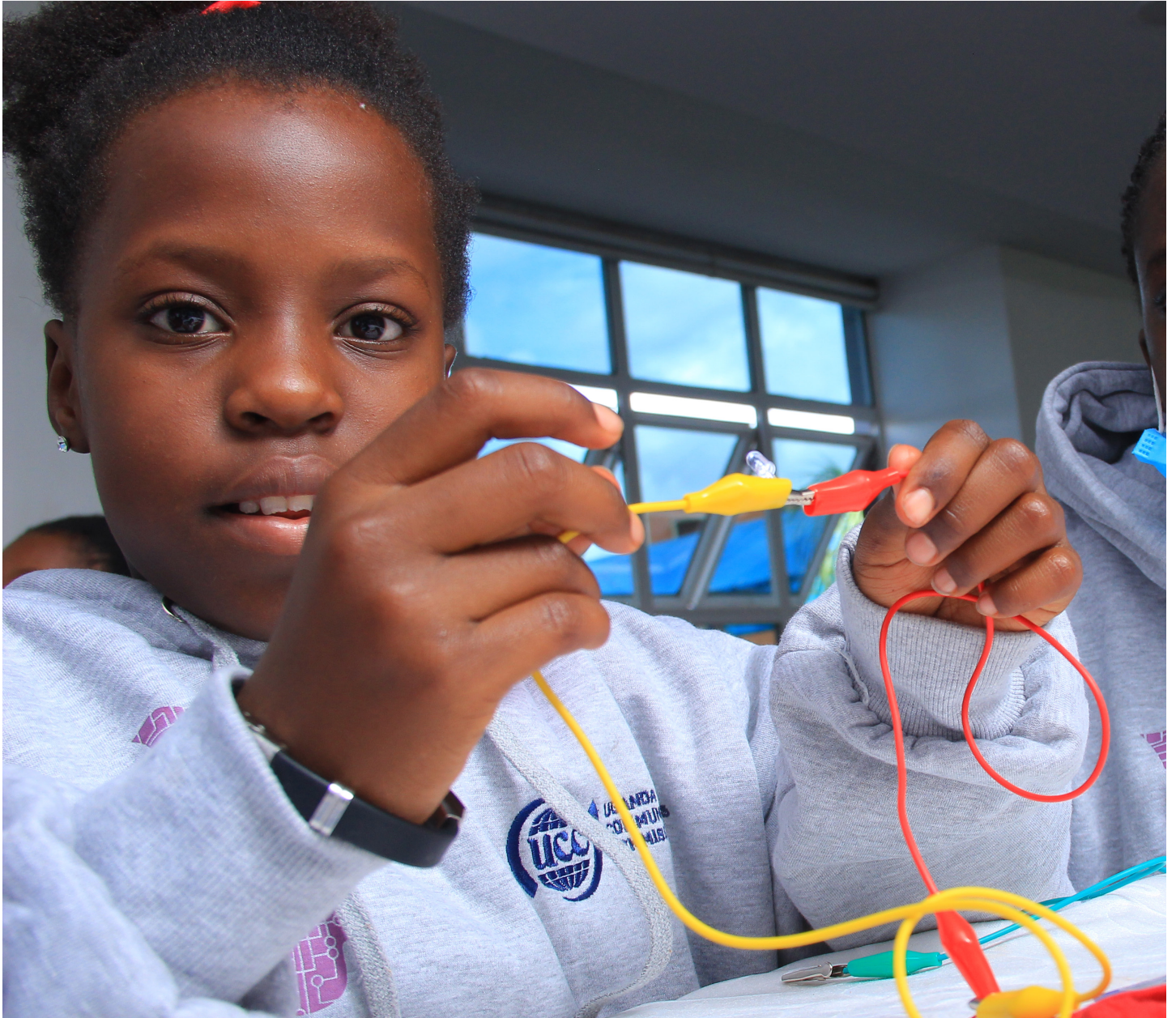
So, in UCUSAF IV we will emphasise those four aspects (connectivity, content mediation, digital literacy and devices) in what we call the broadband value chain or last inch connectivity.

Mr. Nyombi Thembo is the Director Uganda Communications Universal Services Access Fund (UCUSAF).



A beneficiary of a free device from UCUSAF couldn't hide her delight

Top Ten HIGHLIGHTS OF THE



E YEAR 2021



COVID-19 pandemic notwithstanding, the Commission was still able to witness key milestones in 2021. JAMES TUMUSIIME compiled 10 such highlights:

Campaigns go ‘scientific’

The first major event of 2021, not just for UCC but for Uganda as a whole, was the general elections held in January. With COVID-19 hovering, SOPs had to be observed in the electoral process, and that meant doing away with the traditional mass campaigns. The Electoral Commission guided, that candidates would campaign mainly through the media - radio, television, and online platforms. Being the agency responsible for the regulation of broadcasting, the Commission was called upon to develop Guidelines laying out the responsibilities of news media organisations, political parties, candidates, journalists, and other stakeholders regarding the use of the media for campaigns. The Guidelines, which emphasised balance, fairness, and impartiality in reporting, became the blueprint for media houses in covering what came to be known as the “scientific” electoral process.



NCC defies odds

Just like the general elections, nothing could stop the National Conference on Communications (NCC) from going ahead this time, having been postponed in 2020 due to COVID-19. Admittedly, the UCC-sponsored event was quite different from previous editions, with participation both physical (Golden Tulip Hotel) and online.

Hosted by Makerere University's College of Engineering, Design, Art and Technology (CEDAT) in March, under the theme, "Connectivity, Resilience, and Innovation in the COVID-19 Era," the NCC brought together researchers, industry actors, academics and students to deliberate on ICT solutions for today's challenges.

The opening ceremony was graced by, among others, former Minister of ICT and National Guidance Judith Nabakooba, Makerere University Vice Chancellor Prof. Barnabas Nawangwe, and UCC Ag. Executive Director Irene Kaggwa Sewankambo.



Film industry rocks

Like NCC, Uganda Film Festival (UFF) is another major fixture on the UCC calendar that went undone in 2020. However, the 8th edition of Uganda's biggest film festival was to return with a bang in April 2021. More than 50 Ugandan films were submitted with over 1,000 filmmakers attending the screenings, workshops, and the awards gala. Some of the films that stole the show on the day, including *Stain* by Morris Mugisha, *Kemi* and *Catchout* by Samuel Kizito Saviour, and *Tecora* by Hussein Musa Roylicar, have gone on to shine on the international stage. To promote local content further, the Commission gave out UGX 512 million in financial support to four (4) local film projects through the newly established Content Development Support Programme (CDSP). This initiative aims to support Ugandan production companies and individuals to develop audio-visual content that will in turn create job opportunities, generate revenue, promote skills development, and grow domestic audiences.



New Board gets onboard

If good things come to those who wait, the new UCC Board is one such good thing that was worth the wait. After six months without a board, and following what he described as a "rigorous process", the Minister of ICT & National Guidance Dr Chris Baryomunsi unveiled the new Board in September. The board has some familiar and not-so-familiar faces. For starters, Dr Dorothy Okello returned to her old job as chairperson, as did Dr. Jimmy Paat Samanya and Enoch Barata as members. These old blooms were joined by Paul Odoi, Geoffrey Agoi, Lucy Ntabazi, Edson Ngirabakunzi, as well as Ag. Executive Director Irene Kaggwa Sewankambo to complete the high calibre team, as the minister described it. During the new board's inauguration at the Ministry of ICT headquarters on September 1, the ministers and PS pledged their support while the chairperson vowed to drive the Commission's EPIC agenda.

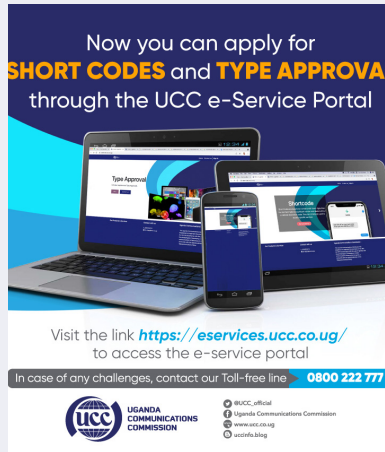


MTN walks the talk

“Epic” is truly the catchword that best describes the milestone that saw MTN Uganda list on the Uganda Securities Exchange (USE) in November, following a successful IPO in October. In so doing, MTN Uganda fulfilled its obligation under the National Telecommunication Operator (NTO) license, which is based on the new Telecommunication Licensing Framework launched in 2020, and in line with the National Broadband Policy of 2018.

Attending a breakfast meeting to celebrate the milestone, the Ag. Executive Director Irene Kaggwa Sewankambo congratulated MTN Uganda upon making “Uganda is Home” more than just a slogan.

She reminded her audience about MTN Uganda’s 23-year journey, coming to this country at a time when acquiring a phone line was a luxury, and getting to this point where Ugandans can own a stake in the telco!



UCC's digital tools

To improve efficiency in service delivery, the Commission introduced two digital tools to help address some of the bottlenecks relating to communication services for both service providers and consumers. The tools are, e-Services and NetQ-UG.

Through the e-Services portal, providers of communications services will now be able to apply for Short Codes and Type Approval online by visiting eservices.ucc.co.ug. The portal is currently offering these two services with several others lined up to follow suit. On its part, NetQ-UG was introduced as part of the Commission’s efforts to monitor the Quality of Service as received by a user of communications services. The NetQ-UG App is available in Google Play Store for Android devices and the Apple App Store for iOS devices. A web version is accessible on <https://netq.ug/speed-test/index.php>



Victory in Victoria

Uganda’s candidate Ms Jessica Hope Ssengooba was elected Assistant Secretary General of the Pan African Postal Union (PAPU) during the 10th ordinary session of the Plenipotentiary conference held at Victoria Falls in Zimbabwe in June. Ms Ssengooba, who works at Posta Uganda as Manager for Corporate Affairs, defeated candidates from Burkina Faso and Niger. She will serve in that position for the period 2022-2025.

PAPU is a specialized institution of the African Union whose main objective is to coordinate activities aimed at developing postal services on the continent.

As the industry regulator and facilitator of development in the communications sector, the Commission champions sustainable growth in the postal sector through various interventions, including maintaining strategic memberships and partnerships with key international stakeholders such as PAPU.



Bridging digital divide

The Uganda Communications Universal Services Access Fund (UCUSAF) ventured in new territory with the distribution of free solar-powered tablets to selected households across the country in November. It is all part of a pilot project that aims to underscore the necessity of ICTs in eradicating household poverty.

The project, which is targeting up to 1,400 underserved households in eight sub-counties across Uganda's four regions, focusses on the demand side interventions by providing low-cost tablets to households as a viable option in bridging the digital divide while addressing issues around connectivity, access, and digital literacy.

It is hoped that the beneficiaries, armed with internet enabled devices and basic digital skills, will be in a much better position to harness user information that is accessible through applications covering critical sectors such as education, health, agriculture, and e-Government.



STEM in Heels

To commemorate International Girls in ICT Day, the Commission hosted at least 30 girls from St Lawrence Kigoowa, Hill Preparatory School and Kitante Primary School, as well as daughters of some UCC staff.

Celebrated on the 4th Thursday in April every year, International Girls in ICT Day was established by the UN specialized agency for ICTs, the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), to celebrate women and girls and encourage them to pursue studies and careers in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics - STEM.

Under the localized theme 'STEM in Heels', UCC partnered with FundiBots, a company that provides hands-on, practical STEM education to children and youths, to conduct a mini robotics camp for upper primary pupils as a symbol of empowering girls to embrace ICTs.

The main objective of the half-day robotics camp was to inspire young girls to consider ICTs as a career option.



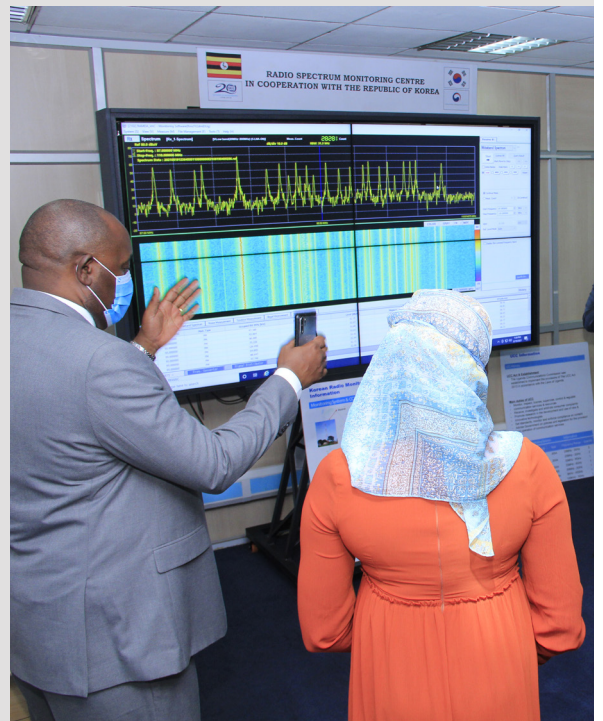
Africell moves on

While there was a lot to celebrate albeit in a very difficult year, Africell Uganda's exit showed it was not all roses. The telecom's shareholders apparently decided to reconsolidate their investments in Africa and to focus on other parts of the world where they have a competitive advantage. Africell entered the Uganda telecom market in 2014, after acquiring majority shares in Orange Uganda Limited. To ensure that the interests of Africell's customers, agents, employees, creditors, and the Government were safeguarded, the Commission put in place several conditions for Africell to fulfill before the exit. The Commission also assured stakeholders that, notwithstanding this development, Uganda's communications sector remained resilient and attractive to local and foreign investors, and adequate measures had been instituted to ensure that Africell's exit doesn't affect the stability and integrity of the sector.

2021 ENDED *in style*



Pictorial



Pictorial



New Ministers **PLEDGE** **SUPPORT FOR UCC**

The Ministry of ICT & National Guidance got new faces at the top during the year, and a visit to Bugolobi in August was an opportunity for the Commission's staff and management to meet their new ministers and Permanent Secretary.

The Ministry of ICT and National Guidance is set to introduce a range of reforms to keep pace with the fast-evolving communication technology trends, Dr Chris Baryomunsi announced during his first visit to UCC as line minister.

He was accompanied by Hon Godfrey Kabyanga, the minister of state for ICT & National Guidance (National Guidance), and the Permanent Secretary, Dr Amina Zawedde.

At the UCC head office at Bugolobi, the trio was welcomed by the top management led by the Ag. Executive Director Irene Kaggwa Sewankambo.

Following a presentation by the Ag. Executive Director, detailing UCC functions, achievements and challenges, the visiting ministers and PS expressed satisfaction with the work of the Commission and pledged to support the agency to fulfil its mandate.

Noting that the UCC vision of “delivering an inclusive digital economy” is central to his ministry’s mandate, Dr Baryomunsi called on UCC and his ministry to work together towards that vision.

On reforms, the minister revealed that his ministry is considering some legislative, administrative and policy measures “because we have to move fast and catch up with what is happening in terms of technology.”

Citing social media as one of the new challenges that call for such legislation, Dr Baryomunsi noted that nowadays, anybody with a phone becomes a media practitioner with the ability to disseminate anything, including insults, hate speech and misinformation.

“All these things call for regulation,” he said.

Earlier in her presentation titled, **“Facilitating, enabling and promoting the coordinated and sustainable growth and development of Uganda’s communications sector,”** the Ag. Executive Director had also called for social media regulation, saying it is now an industry-wide practise globally.

Regulation is not about being a policeman of the sector but rather facilitating, enabling and promoting the use of communications in the country, she pointed out.

Outlining key achievements registered by the sector over the years, the Ag. ED noted that mobile subscriptions had grown from 22.37m in 2016 to 27.78m in 2020, while internet subscriptions had grown from 8.04m in 2016 to 21.4m in 2020.

On challenges the Commission faces, the Ag. ED decried the inadequacy of complimentary services such as electricity required to support the roll-out and maintenance of ICT infrastructure across the country.

In his brief remarks, Hon Kabyanga disclosed that having been mayor of Kasese for ten years, he had witnessed UCC work first-hand, noting that three schools in his area benefited from the e-learning programme.

The minister of state praised the good working relationship between the Commission and the ministry, saying it should be consolidated and nurtured even further.



Hon. Dr. Chris Baryomunsi

Mobile Phone SUBSCRIPTION CONTINUES TO SPUR GROWTH



The communications sector has shown remarkable resilience to overcome the effects of COVID-19 and rebound strongly over the past year. The indicative figures cited in this article, tell the full story.

KAMPALA – Mobile and fixed telephone subscription has continued to be the engine for growth in the communications sector with the market hitting 29 million in the third quarter of 2021.

However, in terms of net quarterly additions, only 200,000 new subscriptions

were posted in the three months July-September 2021, according to the latest market performance report released by Uganda Communications Commission (UCC).

This figure is only a third of the net quarterly subscriber additions witnessed in the preceding two quarters, an indication that the new COVID-19 related demand associated with the last four quarters might be easing off.

The quarterly report indicates that despite the slowdown in quarter-on-quarter additions, the 12-month period ending September 2021 recorded a decent 10% year-on-year growth, with 2.6 million new

customers added to the network.

The 29.1 million subscriptions translate into a telephone penetration of 69%, which can be interpreted as a national penetration of 7 lines out of every 10 Ugandans (regardless of age).

It is also noteworthy, the report points out, that 85% of the 200,000 new mobile connections during the third quarter, were data-enabled connections.

This high broadband connectivity conversion is reportedly driven by the continued shift to data-enabled low-cost entry terminals pushed by both

Mobile Network Operators and independent handset importers.

It is, therefore, not surprising that at the end of September 2021, total internet subscriptions had for the first time crossed the 22 million mark – a broadband penetration rate of 52%. That means every 1 in 2 Ugandans has an active internet connection.

On a year-on-year comparison, the upward trend in broadband connections matches the fixed and mobile subscriptions, with the broadband subscriptions base growing by 1.9 million (10%) between September 2020 and September 2021.

Growth in mobile subscriptions also had a multiplier effect on mobile money accounts, with the total number increasing by 900,000 accounts during the quarter. At the end of September 2021, the total number of registered mobile money accounts stood at 32.3 million.

Indicative of a sustained increase in business activity that is gradually positioning the mobile as a financial tool, the number of active mobile money agents grew by 11%, from 285,371 in June 2021 to 315,895 by the end of September 2021.

Going by a year-on-year analysis, the agent footprint across the country grew by 39%, with over 88,000 mobile money agents joining the

Digital Financial Services (DFS) eco system over the last 12 months.

As for domestic voice traffic, the number of minutes grew to 16.8 billion in the period July-September 2021 – almost 1 billion minutes more than domestic traffic volumes recorded in April – June 2021.

“This 6% domestic traffic growth represents the highest quarter-on-quarter domestic traffic growth in the last 12 months (four quarters),” the report stated.

Regarding international voice traffic, there was a reduction of 10 million minutes in total calls to and from Uganda during the three months ending September 2021. This drop from 127 million minutes in 2Q21 to 117 million minutes in 3Q21 is consistent with the international traffic contraction realised over the last 12 months.

The contraction in international traffic has been attributed to traffic migration to Over-The-Top (OTT) calling platforms, as well as restrictions in international travel that translated into a slow-down in global business and related communication during the period under review.

Acknowledging that this period coincided with the second COVID-19 lockdown, the report notes a spike in broadband traffic, which it attributes to learners and employees adopting online working methods.

The total broadband traffic grew to 100 billion MBs, up from the 69 billion MBs recorded in the second quarter (April-June). This is the first time more than 100 billion MBs have been downloaded in a single quarter, the report observed.

Turning to broadcasting, the report indicates that by the end of September 2021, 40 free-to-air TV stations were carried on SIGNET, the Government-owned platform that delivers free-to-air television.

On the other hand, the Pay TV market, which is served by a combination of satellite, cable, and digital terrestrial networks, saw a slight contraction in total active subscribers – from 1.60 million as of June 2021 to 1.54 million in September 2021.

This has been attributed to the seasonal subscriber contraction in July – September, which has been consistently observed over the last three years.

Elsewhere, the period under review witnessed the rolling out of the Electronic Government Procurement System (eGP) in eleven selected entities as a pilot project.

The eGP is a web-based tool that has been introduced to facilitate effective and efficient public procurement and disposal. Using ICT, the tool conducts end-to-end Government procurement and disposal online.

The Government plans to roll out the programme at all Ministries, Departments and Agencies within the next three years.

Another innovation worth noting is the Eurogiro Financial Supermarket launched by Uganda Post Limited (UPL) in partnership with EUROGIRO. The platform facilitates financial services such as mobile money transfers, agency banking and international money transfers.

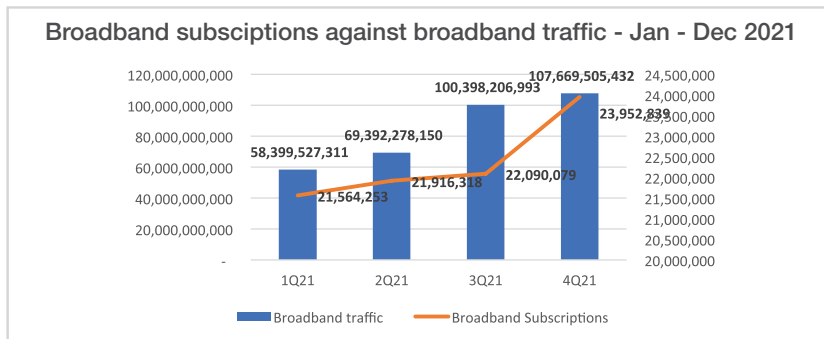
The Eurogiro Financial Supermarket is an open payment platform

that empowers postal organisations to actively engage in financial services, both locally and globally. Eurogiro, whose key objective is to ease cross border financial transactions and business, hosts key players in the DFS eco system such as MoneyGram, Mobile Money, Western Union, and World Remit.

“The platform will enable clients to send and receive money to over 200 countries using a simple, reliable, swift, and convenient platform, which will help in bridging the

financial gap between rural Uganda and the digital world,” said the report.

The UCC market performance report provides a quarterly local and global communications market overview that seeks to help industry actors, prospective entrants, Government, and other stakeholders to keep up to date with trends and developments in the sector.



Fixed & Mobile Internet Subscriptions

Quarter	Fixed internet subscriptions	Mobile internet subscriptions	Total internet Subscriptions
1Q21	33,095	21,531,158	21,564,253
2Q21	29,412	21,886,906	21,916,318
3Q21	35,403	22,054,676	22,090,079
4Q21	38,481	23,914,358	23,952,839

Fixed & Mobile Subscriptions

	Fixed Subscriptions	Mobile Subscriptions
1Q21	97,187	28,272,047
2Q21	103,179	28,882,840
3Q21	104,213	29,074,748
4Q21	105,086	30,127,704





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Uganda Film Festival RETURNS AS SECTOR LOOKS BEYOND COVID-19



COVID-19 might have kept cinema and video halls locked up, but the resilience of the Ugandan film industry has been evident with the Uganda Film Festival staging a successful event in April 2021 and local films winning awards at home and abroad. As the UFF 2022 edition whose theme is “Creative Industry as a Solution to Unemployment” gets underway, LEONARD AMANYA analyses the challenges, successes, and opportunities:

The film industry in many countries, including Uganda, was negatively affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Cinemas, video halls and theatres were closed as one of the measures to control the spread of the pandemic. Some owners of these business premises were forced to migrate to other business ventures for survival.

This has raised questions as to whether the film industry will ever pull through and get back to normal, and if interventions by the Uganda Communications Commission (UCC) can support the industry to recover and become even stronger.

At the peak of the COVID-19 crisis, lockdown restrictions were put in place, with ordinary people required to justify their

movements. As a result, all aspects of film production, distribution and exhibition were drastically affected.

Besides, the financial uncertainty could not allow the film producers to run their film projects, including engaging production crews and cast members. It was much later, after COVID-19 vaccination started picking pace, that the restrictions were eased to allow people go back to work with Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) in place.

The film industry slowly adapted to the new normal with more local audiences subscribing to online streaming channels such as Netflix, Netstudios and Afronobile, among others. Through these channels, film lovers were able to watch movies and other content that they could no longer access in their local

cinemas, video halls and theatres.

To keep the candle burning and ensure continuity amid the gloom, the Commission organised the 8th edition of the Uganda Film Festival early this year. Surprisingly, more than 50 Ugandan films were submitted with over 1,000 filmmakers attending the screenings, workshops, and the Awards ceremony.

The festival took the hybrid approach, with activities held both physically and virtually. The films that stole the show on the day, including *Stain* by Morris Mugisha, *Kemi* and *Catchout* by Samuel Kizito Saviour, and *Tecora* by Hussein Musa Roylicar, have gone ahead to win Awards in other film festivals around the world, including Nigeria, South Africa, Zanzibar, Zambia, Brazil, USA and Kenya. Only recently,



some of these movies starred at the 17th Africa Movie Academy Awards (AMAA) in Nigeria, with *Stain* scooping seven (7) nominations, *Tecora* three (3), and *Monica* one (1). *A Thousand Fate*, *Meat* and *Noboth* also scooped one (1) nomination each.

At the AMA awards gala in Lagos, Joan Agaba won Best Lead Actress in a Feature Film (*Stain*) while Asher Roshen's *Meat* won Best Short Film award in what was clearly a great night for Ugandan film.

Recently, the Uganda film Industry also got a shot in the arm when it was announced that Loukman Ali's film "The Girl in a Yellow Jumper" would feature on Netflix, becoming the first Ugandan film to do so.

Such positive news can only spur Ugandan content producers to up their game as local audiences

start to yearn for more. This will in turn open the way for more Ugandan films to showcase at the international stage and reap the benefits that come with that exposure.

The Commission's efforts, to create a competitive environment for local content producers to enable them make quality content and to produce talent that can compete at the regional and international stage, are bearing fruit.

The Government's commitment to support the local film industry through the pandemic can further be reflected through the Commission's establishment of the Content Development Support Programme (CDSP).

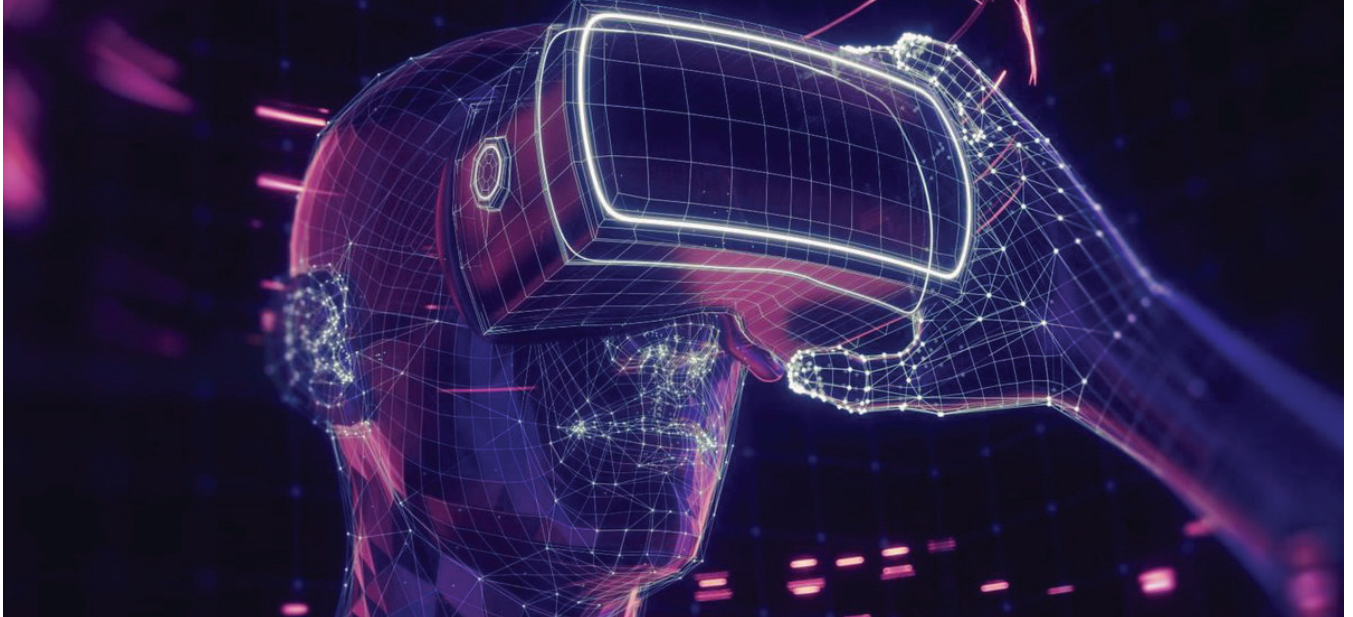
This initiative aims to support Ugandan production companies and individuals to develop audio-visual content that will in turn create

job opportunities, generate revenue, promote skills development, and grow domestic audiences.

This year, the Commission has given out UGX 503 million in financial support to four (4) local film projects. With funding secured, the project promoters will be able to concentrate on developing, producing, and marketing outstanding film projects for local and international markets.

The Commission believes that these combined efforts will go a long way to boost the quality of local content and position it to excel at international level, thus promoting Uganda as a film market to contend with as well as a worthy filming destination.

Technology - TRENDS TO WATCH IN 2022



Various technological innovations are set to expand their markets by improving accessibility and functionality for wider audiences. Read on to get to know the top technology trends in 2022:

COVID-19 has changed the way we live and view the world. Things have become more digitalised, personalised, and distanced from one another. But through this distance, technology has been working to bring people closer together. This new tendency has led to the rapid development of innovations in various fields- shopping, medicine, production, and supply chain management.

These innovative outcomes aim to facilitate performance and improve work environments, reduce unnecessary delay between transactions and communications, and guarantee longer life expectancy. However, even in the absence of a pandemic, these technology trends are important innovations with room for extensive development.

Here are the top tech trends for 2022.

Cryptocurrency

Inheriting massive success over recent years, cryptocurrency is expected to maintain its firm position in the realm of technology trends. Although digital currency faced certain setbacks in 2021 – the global realisation of high carbon emissions, Chinese restrictions on mining operations, and Elon Musk’s sudden rejection of bitcoin payment – venture capitalists and cryptocurrency experts, including Tim Draper, believe it will be at the centre of global financial activities.

With many industries planning to receive crypto payments and some countries such as El Salvador authorising Bitcoin as a legal tender, major crypto firms are working to expand the utilisation of digital currencies.

Metaverse

Imagine having an online meeting, where you do not use your keyboard and mouse to navigate, but instead your hands, just like in the real world. The Metaverse is an artificial space where the physical world meets the virtual world. Through virtual reality (VR) technology, digital representations of people will be able to interact, play games physically, have

conversations, try on new clothes, etc. Facebook is the current leading company in the industry, as Mark Zuckerberg has revealed his vision of realigning his social media company with the wider Metaverse.

Artificial Intelligence

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is expected to expand its sphere of influence in the coming year. Relevant firms are in preparation for their technologies to be involved in many industries, including healthcare, cybersecurity, production, and autonomous vehicles. While the AI market’s value reached US\$35.92 billion in 2020, this number is expected to gradually hit US\$360.36 billion in 2028.

Notable players in the AI industry in Asia include Hong Kong’s Customindz, which utilises machine learning, predictive analytics, and classification tools for marketing purposes and fraud detection, and Chinese AI company AutoCore, a significant player in developing autonomous driving software.

Cloud Computing

COVID-19 has accelerated the transition between traditional ways of doing business to the utilisation of cloud computing. IT experts predict that the industry will be at the forefront of all technological innovation in 2022, as tech giants such as Microsoft and Amazon are set to expand the infrastructure by developing hybrid cloud computing and strengthening cybersecurity. 94% of enterprises already use cloud services, and the market has the potential to reach US\$623.3 billion by 2023 worldwide.

3D Printing

With the growing demand for personalised equipment and quicker supply chain, the accessibility of 3D printing has become urgent during the pandemic. Analysts believe that the 3D printing market will grow from US\$12.6 billion

in 2021 to US\$34.8 billion in 2026. Despite current restraints on this technology, such as limited availability of printers and high cost of raw materials, 3D printers will soon be used for personal, professional, and production purposes in various industries as prices of its models continue to decline while its demand rises.

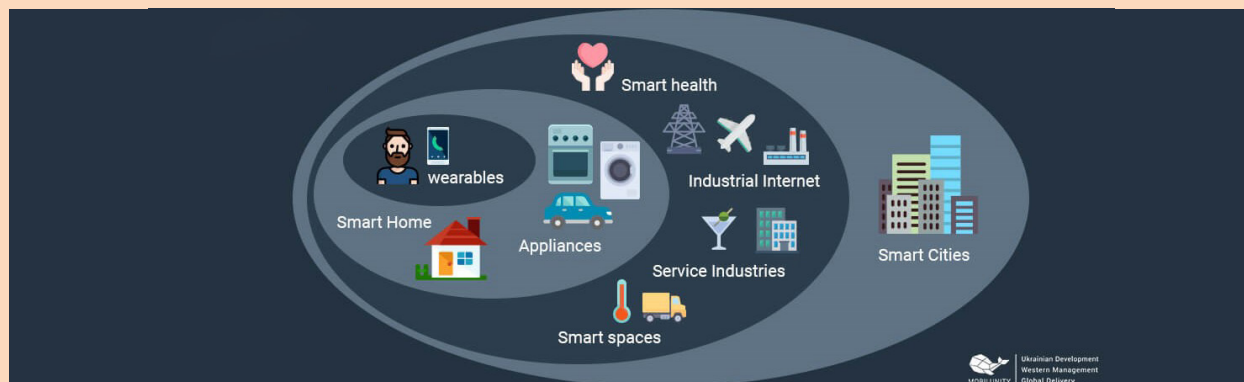
Medical Robotics

The digitalisation of machines to assist humans for their precision and efficiency is a trend being adopted in many industries, including the medical field. Medical robotics will lower the risk of infection, surgical error and malpractice, and decisions that lack empirical reasoning. Health experts and analysts expect the medical robotics market to surpass US\$16 billion by 2025 with most profit and expansion to be made in the segments of surgical and rehabilitation robotics. Mediaroid is the first Japanese company approved by the country’s Ministry of Health to produce and sell a robotic-assisted surgery system. Hintorini, the company’s robotic assisted surgery system, displays human-like sophisticated movement and vibrant high-definition images for doctors.

Nanotechnology

Another field set to expand the field of medical robotics is nanotechnology (NanoTech), its market predicted to reach US\$70.7 billion in value by 2026. With the technological capability to measure and control matter at nanoscale, this new technological advancement will enhance many sectors, not only including medicine, but also consumer products, energy, materials, and manufacturing, gradually emerging as one of the prospective leading tech trends in 2022.

This article was extracted from Hive Life magazine



The Battle Of **HIDDEN TRUTH**



It is December 2021! We thank thee oh Lord. We are alive, an aspect never to be taken for granted. I am dedicating this piece to my fallen friend who for almost six months now, is resting under a mango tree in Sempa village. I know you would have enjoyed arguing with me on this one. The behind the curtain hidden truths!

BRENDA SSENTAMU

Many of us are officially tutored by the Church, family, and peers, expecting that the marriage/relationship chapters shall be written as lectured. There is a great deal that is archived in the dark, with the expectation that we miraculously innovate appropriate torches to light up our paths.

Despite William Shakespeare's assertions on love, including that fact that Romeo and Juliet met and instantly fell in love, the law of diminishing returns alludes to the fact that *value or enjoyment we get from something starts to decrease after a certain point*.

Indeed, it may not be a lasting impression as envisaged by the "till death do us part" vows or in the poetic Maya Angelou version of "In all the world, there is no heart for me like yours. *In all the world, there is no love for you like mine*".

It is a fact that Divorce Lawyer bank accounts are growing; Pre-nuptial agreements are gradually migrating to Shaka-Zulu land; and Polygamy is thinning out as a rare commodity. May be Mothers and Fathers Union membership ought to be mandatory. Cliché as it might sound, renewal of vows is an emerging hot cake!

The Bible in 1 Corinthians 7:3 says, "The husband should give to his wife her conjugal rights, and likewise the wife to her husband". The assumption is that the thesis will always yield perfect scores, notwithstanding the science behind functionality of the AK47s and the Cleopatras.

It is a natural reaction for a first time AstraZeneca

client with adverse effects to avoid a second such shot or strongly contemplate the Pfizer version. At Queen Elizabeth National Park, it is true that the African Elephant destroys more vegetation and leaves a more visible foot mark than is the case with a hedgehog. How then do we differentiate acts of responsibility from those of love?

Children, the unsolicited competition. In the book Genesis, God said, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth...". In the same Bible, Jesus said that "Children are a gift from the Lord". Surprisingly, this gift is tearing homes apart. After the glorious victory of manufacturing, the expectant mother worries about the body change as the father-to-be breaks sweat over the what if something happens paranoia. When the child arrives, the scarcity of the mother as she nurtures the child tortures the husband's ego. The COVID-19 pandemic era has had small household parents missing out on 'adult talk' due to full time presence of children. Question is, who is more deserving of her time?

The why me question. Genesis 2:24 summarizes the covenant between Adam and Eve as: "*Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh*". It is always assumed that one flesh is glued by love or liking or whatever that feeling is. Do we really know why this man/woman chose to become one flesh? Are you the beautiful accessory that he wishes to show off at ceremonies; Or the man that shall ably look after her aging parents; Or the woman his body cannot forget; Or the tall-dark and handsome prize her peers were drooling over?



All relationships have unspoken truths

Anyway, finally they start living together. Depending on whether ‘the test before buy’ approach was adopted or not, the new ecosystem is narrower and reveals subtleties that may have missed the eye of love birds. Beyonce Knowles argues that “love is so blind, it feels right when it is wrong”. Allow me to cite some unpleasant truths. A woman without make up may look unrecognizable. Our bodies may let off toxic excreta as they sleep. Strange habits like not brushing teeth and bathing are not unusual. Forests and bushes may not be slashed. Birth significantly alters elasticity. Most of the women’s hair is foreign! Was it the right choice after all?

Financial inequity, the puzzle. Man, the expected full-time financier. Woman, the supposed-to-be a full-time home-maker turning into a potential financier. It is cruel that society has difficulty understanding why a man fails to provide for his family or rather has less financial muscle than the woman; and yet society is more accepting of today’s woman joining the man in the working world, forfeiting the home-making to hired domestic specialists.

Dear Man, after a perceived tolerable period, a woman shall discuss your thin wallet with her Pastor/ Reverend, peers, parents, children, and anyone who will listen! The scriptures have it that David used a string and five stones to topple better-armed Goliath. As a Man, your David-like tools may be as simple as quenching her attention demands as she makes the family money! Question is, for how long will your esteem survive deterioration?

Dear Woman, amidst your struggle to not antagonize his manliness, you will be judged as the selfish, malicious woman who failed to bring out the best in him if your Man settled for stay-home husband status caused by inability to find an income earning solution. As a wife, are you loving enough to accept his financial disadvantage and willing to discard all insecurity about your infamous choice?

The silent treatment a.k.a Olusirika. This, however brutal, is loud communication about the unspoken ugly truths. As a feminine soldier, I know that we use the Olusirika weapon when at the edge, praying that our male counterparts interrogate the root cause of the seemingly juvenile muteness. Surprisingly, as echoed by a blogger’s post – “Behind every angry woman is a man who has absolutely no idea what he did wrong”. It is historically true that men are inherently unwired for reading between lines. My sisters, will the Olusirika win us Olympic medals?

Lastly, death. In his Message in a Bottle movie, Nicholas Sparks wooed us with his line... “True love is rare, and it’s the only thing that gives life real meaning”. Are we prepared for life after death of a loved one? Wills are a rare conversation. And yet, it is increasingly becoming normal for spouses to independently invest, hold individual bank accounts, have unknown business partnerships, and accumulate debt without spousal consent. For the men, it is almost understandable to have undisclosed ‘outside’ children. Are spouses aware of repercussions of not knowing?

It is my prayer that we discover our hidden truths and believe that with God, nothing is impossible.

'Quick Feet' SLIPS AWAY TO MEET HIS LORD & SAVIOUR



The saddest moment of 2021 was most certainly the death of long-serving staff member Simon Bugaba in June. His friend and former old boy MARTIN M. LWANGA penned this moving tribute.

Early this year I received a WhatsApp message from a man known to many as Eng. Simon Bugaba of Uganda Communications Commission. But to his classmates he was known as Quick Feet. Our King's College Budo class (1977-83) had in appreciation of the education we received there long decided to sponsor at least one needy student every year. The man spearheading this class project was none other than Simon.

"Just contacted the Deputy," he wrote. "He says he will give us a shortlist next week."

Amid his busy schedule as a top official at UCC, Simon had gone to great lengths to gather details of needy students at Budo.

A four-person select committee he headed had decided that our next [beneficiary] should this time be a girl. Simon came up with four names. When we met on April 7, 2021, he had already done investigative work, breaking down the students'

home environment, performance and needs. It did not take us long to agree on one girl. Once we presented her to the rest of the classmates, there was immediate agreement to support her.

Job well done! That is why we called Simon Quick feet.

I first met Simon in 1981 as a new A-level student (Njuka) at Budo. Perhaps because of his soft-spoken nature, and unassuming ways, he didn't make a fast impression on me. He had joined Budo in 1977, coming from upcountry primary schools-based at Sempa, Bulindo, Bamusuuta and one in Kiboga. Having excelled and being needy, he was admitted on a Bursary scholarship, something he would never forget.

Besides enjoying his academics, Simon took to cricket where he tortured opponents as a wicked batsman. Volleyball was another of his passions and he loved spurring on the opposite side of the net with his classmate, now Dr George Mutema. However,

another even more consuming interest was that Simon was a very committed Christian.

In his first year, together with his house mate, Tim Sentongo, and Isaac Kironde, during one "contact" fellowship, the trio committed their lives to Jesus Christ as Lord and personal Saviour.

"One of our earliest joint encounters was when Douglas Kisaka was heading Contact choir in 1977," reminisced Isaac, years later. "Simon and I tried to join but were turned down..."

The young enthusiastic converts were not deterred. Simon, together with Tim and Isaac, studied closely together, and returned for A-level, with him taking on the demanding PCM combination.

On meeting him in Canada House, in spite of my then indifference to his faith, we developed a healthy respect for each other, largely due to his genial character. Indeed,

when in our final year he was appointed House prefect there was unanimous support for him, especially for those of us often at the wrong side of the law. I could count on him to bail me out whenever I got into trouble, which was not that rare, to be conservative.

As prefect, Simon took it upon himself to welcome and mentor those who joined Canada House. One S1 student, now Dr Enoch Sebuyongo, would later recall how he was not only warmly received, but was encouraged by him to commit his life to Christ, just as he had done in SI.

“One day he gave us a word of encouragement,” Dr Sebuyongo would later recall, “from Psalms 34:8 - Oh taste and see that the Lord is good; Blessed is the man who trusts in Him!”

Simon was affected by the 1980-5 guerrilla war, which was perched in his home area of Luwero. Unable to return home, the family of his friend Tim Sentongo took him in and he became an adopted son. After passing A-level, both joined Makerere University in the 1981 class, with Simon taking a Bachelor of Science degree; Tim going for Medicine; while Isaac was admitted for a Bachelor of Science Agriculture. Admitted into Lumumba Hall, he and Tim, who would later become Chair of the Christian Student Fellowship, were also roommates.

Around that time, one of the most thriving evangelical churches in Kampala was the Redeemed Church, just outside Makerere University main gate. Built of reeds (kiwempe), the church preached fervently for anyone who cared to listen to accept Jesus as a personal saviour.

Simon, along with Isaac, not only joined this church but soon banded up with a number of university students, including Allen Kakuyo Kagina, later to head URA and UNRA, and Jennifer Lubwama Musisi, later to head KCCA, to form the Restoration Band.

“Simon played drums,” recalled Isaac, sometimes bass, but also sang. A famous song he led was written by Ben Kayizi, called “Bind man”!

Soon after graduating, in 1988, Simon took up employment with then Uganda Posts and Telecommunications Limited (UPTCL). These days it is quite rare to find someone who works for virtually one organization all his entire life, which was to be his case. He started out at the bottom in the regulatory department, along with one of his Budo classmates, Eng Miriam Wambuzi Kawuma.

In the mid 1990s, after the liberalization of Uganda’s economy, UPTCL was broken up into Uganda Telecommunications Limited (UTL), Uganda Post Limited (UPL), and UCC. Of the three splinter organisations, UCC was certainly much smaller and perhaps with less prospects. In hindsight, it must have been providence that led Simon to move to the unknown new entity, UCC, in 1998 as one of the first staff there. As Uganda’s telecommunication industry grew, Simon would grow with it, eventually making him one of the leading telecommunication experts in the country.

In 1998, as a result of the liberalization policy, the radio industry had opened up to new private stations. I happened to be involved in starting one FM

station, Power FM, and often found myself dropping by his office, based at Communications House, which was responsible for licensing.

It is there that I came to discover how Simon’s life had progressed since we had left university. In 1990, while at UPTCL, Simon had met a girl named Agnes whom he started courting. The two got married on 1st March 1992. Though many had since moved on, I found Simon was still attending Redeemed Church, where he was now one of the elders. In brief, there was little change about the unassuming person I had first met back at school.

As UCC grew to oversee the rapidly growing telecom industry, Simon also grew with it. He rose to be in charge of Telecom Licensing and Service development as well as Service Quality Compliance. Later, he was promoted to Head of Regional Offices at UCC. Finally, he became the Head of Estates and Administration.

In October 2008, the World Telecommunication Standardization Assembly (WTSA), which is held every four years and sets Global Standards, elected Simon to serve as the Vice-Chairman of Study Group 13 responsible for future networks, including mobile telephony. In addition, he was also elected to serve as the Group Rapporteur. Later, the Telecommunication Standardization Sector (ITU-T), which coordinates standards for telecommunications and Information Communication Technology around the world elected him to be the first Chairman of the Regional Group for Africa.



In all this time his career was never bloated with a single scandal. Once, when he was unfairly made redundant, he went to his church and shared how he had lost his job. But his Pastor assured him that the God who gave him that job would redeem him. Indeed, later found blameless, he was recalled. He would end up as one of the longest serving staff at UCC, by the time of his death.

And then, while he was a top official at UCC, Simon shunned the perks that many long for and become so attached to while in big positions. He preferred to drive his pick-up to work, shunning the official SUV, and normally walked back from office to home, as part of his exercise regime.

Simon also remained a down to earth “simple dude”, as he once described himself. His friends would come to rely on him for a fast hand whenever in need.

“When my university in UK required accreditation of my first degree”, recalled his old friend Isaac, who had since settled in UK as an engineer, “and I didn’t know where to turn, once I mentioned it to Simon, despite his busy schedule, he made time and effort to retrieve my transcript.”

In 2014, Cathy my wife and I needed to process some new personal documents and he just said, “leave it”, and in three weeks he had it done.

Yet if there was anything that defined Simon, it was his service to his church, support for his former school and commitment to his family. He never left the church he joined as a young university student.

Pastor Robert Kasaija noted that when he received his first salary, he quickly brought his tithe to see the Lord’s work prosper. This is a habit he continued to the end of his life.

At King’s College Budo, where his eldest son Aaron Kibirige later joined, the headmaster, Bakka Male, found him to be one of the most supportive parents.

“Selfless service on house committees,” the headmaster recalls, “and until his death fees sponsor to the needy.”

Once on scholarship, Simon was always looking for students like him, to extend a helping hand.

When he married Agnes, she was still studying her ICOSA. Agnes’ parents had cautioned him, before releasing her, that he commits to let her finish her studies. He never abandoned that promise.

“Aside from being a good husband,” she would later testify, “he made sure that I completed my studies. He would drive me to school and wait to pick me up. After passing, he accompanied me to UK for the award of my ICOSA certification.” Agnes now works in the Internal Audit Department of KCCA.

Early this year, while chatting on the Budo 77-83 class forum, Simon shared with pride how their first-born Aaron Kibirige had graduated as a mechanical engineer, and Sarah Namuggga, who follows, as an ICT specialist. Meanwhile, Solome Nankumbi had just finished S6 at Gayaza High School, while the last born Samantha Nakubulwa, was in her P7 vacation.

At the start of last week, Simon started feeling unwell. He took

some medication to stem a serious bout of cough and flu. Describing himself as a “bad patient”, he prayed for complete healing.

After recovering from one long sleepless night, on June 14, he sent a message of praise to his friends on his church forum. With his energy back, he reported back to work. On our class forum that day, he sent a message of condolence to Dr Frank Lule, who had just lost his father.

Simon had a full day at work up to Wednesday. However, on Thursday, he woke up weak and decided to stay home for a rest. Later in the day, Agnes noticed him struggling with his breathing, and decided to rush him to Kampala Hospital. By the time the car got to the hospital, he had slipped away quietly to meet the Lord Jesus whom he had accepted as his Savior as a small boy, back in 1977.

Simon was a man whom you met and made you feel like a giant. He carried himself so simply and many would miss him as he walked back home from work, yet he was a global telecoms industry icon. He was looking forward to his retirement, but the Lord had better plans.

“Quick feet” is now forever with his Lord and Saviour.

The author Dr. Martin M. Lwanga is a lecturer at Uganda Christian University Mukono.

Coming Up In 2022

Uganda Film Festival (UFF 2022)

The 9th edition of the Uganda Film Festival (UFF) was launched in December 2021 under the theme, “Creative Industry as a Solution to Unemployment”.

UFF was established in 2013 as an initiative to promote a viable film industry to support Uganda’s economy, create employment, revenue generation and preserve Ugandan culture.

The festival provides a platform to recognise and celebrate excellence in Uganda’s film industry.

The main activities leading up to the awards gala scheduled for May 2022 include film screening, training workshops, awareness campaigns and industry capacity building initiatives.

The 8th edition of Uganda Film Festival was held at the Uganda Institute of Information and Communication Technology (UICT) on April 2, 2021.

A call for submission of entries in the different categories opened on December 9, 2021 and will close on March 31, 2022.



National Conference on Communications (NCC2022)

The College of Engineering, Design, Art, and Technology (CEDAT) at Makerere University, and the Uganda Communications Commission (UCC), are jointly organising the 7th National Conference on Communications, which is scheduled for May 2022.

As part of pre-conference activities, publishing masterclasses will be conducted at five universities in Uganda with the aim of raising the quality and standard of submitted technical papers.

The Commission initiated the conference in 2010 to offer students, researchers, academia, and practitioners a platform to identify new research challenges, share solutions and discuss issues relevant to the communications sector in Uganda.

Last year’s event was held on March 3, 2021 at the Golden Tulip Hotel in Kampala.

A call for technical papers closes on March 14, 2022.



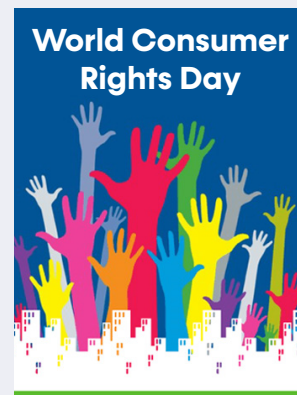
World Consumer Rights Day & Girls in ICT Day 2022

March 15, 2022 is World Consumer Rights Day.

In line with the theme, ‘Digital Safety for All’, the Commission will mark the day with a breakfast event during which discussions will be held on measures to improve safety and enhance trust in the digital economy through collaborative regulation.

Later in April, the Commission will organise the “Consumer Awareness Week” and host the 12th Communications Consumer Parliament in Arua on April 29, 2022.

International Girls in ICT Day, which seeks to promote a global environment that empowers and encourages women to consider careers in the ICT field, is celebrated on the 4th Thursday in April every year. This year, the event coincides with the UCC Consumer Week (April 25-29), and as such, the two events are to be consolidated to enrich and diversify the Commission’s consumer empowerment initiatives.

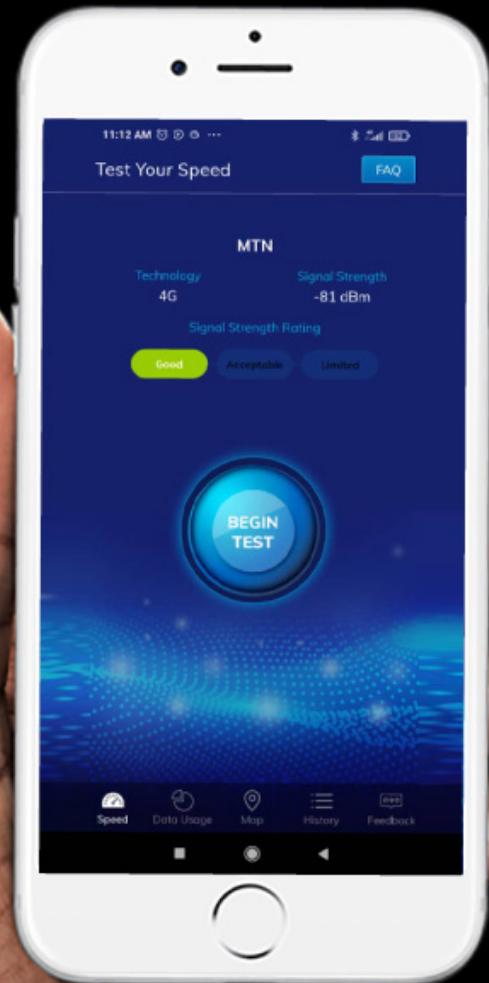


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