

# HER Internet

BIANNUAL NEWSLETTER

## HIGHLIGHTS

A Call to #AccelerateAction and Bridge The Gender #DigitalDivide. #IWD2025.

Digital Futures Learning and Visioning Convention 2025.

Internet Governance Forum (IGF) 2025: Building Digital Governance Together.

## Hellos!

As we reflect on the first half of 2025, it's impossible to ignore the growing shadow cast over Uganda's digital landscape. With the Uganda Communications Commission (UCC) now planning to procure a social media surveillance tool ahead of the 2026 elections, we must ask: What does increased state monitoring mean for structurally silenced communities, for journalists, queer activists, and all of us who use digital platforms to speak truth to power? At HER Internet, we view this moment as yet another reminder that our digital rights, privacy, freedom of expression, and safety are not separate from our human rights; they are deeply connected.

Surveillance in the name of "national security" only deepens the risks faced by those already at the margins. That's why we remain committed to building digital resilience, advocating for inclusive governance, and co-creating online ecosystems that work for us not against us.

In this newsletter, we take you through highlights of our engagements from January to June 2025, each one a step towards a freer, safer internet for structurally silenced communities in Uganda and beyond.



## A Call to #AccelerateAction and Bridge The Gender #DigitalDivide. #IWD2025.

In March 2025, HER Internet marked International Women's Day 2025 with a powerful month-long campaign under the theme #AccelerateAction, aimed at closing the gender digital divide and creating safer, more inclusive online spaces for structurally silenced womxn in Uganda. Through real-life stories, short videos, and weekly reflections, the campaign explored the roots and impact of digital exclusion highlighting barriers such as high data costs, low digital literacy, online harassment, and gendered norms. We shared practical policy recommendations, celebrated small wins like Amina's digital empowerment journey, and spotlighted the realities of female sex workers, particularly those with intersecting identities like queer and womxn living with disabilities in navigating online spaces. Bridging the digital divide is about justice, opportunity, and collective action.

All campaign videos are available on HER Internet's YouTube channel-

<https://shorturl.at/OYMIZ>



## Cohort 4 of Power Of Pride (P.O.P) Digital Safety and Security Trainings.



HER Internet conducted basic Digital Safety and Security training workshops for womxn based in Eastern region in Mbale, West Nile province in Arua and Mbarara on 10th April, 22nd April and 17<sup>th</sup> June respectively. The aim was to impart and support the participants with skills, tools and knowledge in digital safety and security at individual, organizational and community levels to build their vigilance and resilience to counter increasing cases of cybercrimes, online violence and Technology Facilitated Gender Based Violence (TFGBV) stemming from the extreme levels of surveillance and censorship post AHA and ahead of the 2026 general elections.



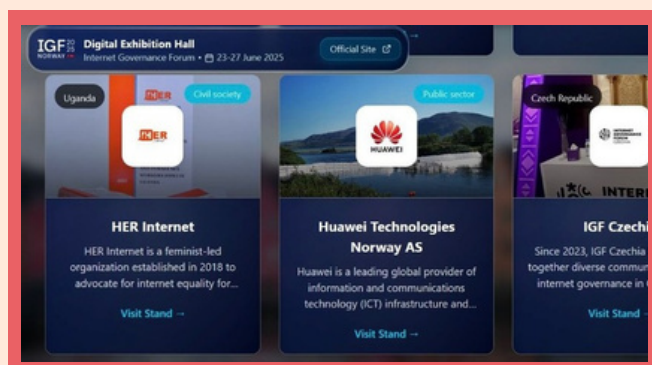
## Digital Futures Learning and Visioning Convention 2025.

HER Internet hosted Digital Futures Learning and Visioning Convention under the theme Digital Futures from 13th to 16th May 2025 in Kampala with support from Legal Empowerment Fund (LEF) under the Fund for Global Human Rights. The residential in-person event attracted attendance and participation of a diverse group of womxn from different regions of Uganda with the sole purpose to raise awareness and understanding of the implications of existing laws which suppress freedoms of speech and expression for womxn, facilitate experience sharing to build a sense of community, support, understanding and learning from each other's realities, and, identify available mechanisms or actionable strategies on how to build consensus and navigate the tensions between safety both online and offline while exercising the digital rights of speech and expression given the volatile political and restrictive legal contexts ahead of the 2026 general elections. Read about the convention via:

<https://shorturl.at/Jgtu4>



## Internet Governance Forum (IGF) 2025: Building Digital Governance Together.



HER Internet showcased and virtually attended at the 20th annual Internet Governance Forum (IGF) 2025 event which was held in Lillestrøm, Norway from 23rd to 27th June 2025 under the overarching theme "Building Digital Governance Together". The IGF 2025 aimed to be an inclusive and participatory space for all stakeholders, including governments, civil society, the private sector, academia, and the technical community.

To engage in open dialogue and contribute to shaping the future of the internet through strengthening diversity and collaboration through four key sub-themes; digital cooperation, digital trust and resilience, sustainable and responsible innovation, and, universal access and digital rights which are crucial for a vibrant and sustainable digital ecosystem. IGF 2025 hosted a total of 262 sessions and attracted participation over 9435 participants across the globe. For more information on the expo and entire event, check out:

<https://igf2025.lumiere.no/expo>

## Living Safely: Safety and Security Manual For Structurally silenced Communities In Rural Areas.

With facilitation from the HER Internet team, Twilight Support Initiative Uganda (TSIU) held a strategic two-day workshop event which hosted a group of representatives from rural structurally silenced communities based in Rwezori region from Tuesday 25th March to Wednesday 26th March 2025 in Kasese. Considering the diverse lived realities, ideas and perspectives, this physical workshop event aimed to identify the safety and security risks, threats and challenges of rural communities of structurally silenced persons which resulted into the development of a holistic safety and security manual titled “Living safely” which provides strategies to counter such concerns given the constantly changing yet restrictive context in Uganda.



## Advanced Level Device Security and Privacy Training.



In partnership with East African Feminist Network Project (Fem Peace EA Project), HER Internet conducted a two days Advanced Level Device Security and Privacy Training for 7 staff of Embibo Gender Initiative based in Kamwenge district from 6th to 7th May 2025. This training aimed to strengthen the capacity of the participants in utilization and navigation of digital tools and skills to enhance their online privacy and safety at individual, collective and organizational level following their needs assessment report. It was also an opportunity to test the Digital safety and security manual developed for feminist led organizations under the East African Feminist Network Project for digital support.



## Digital Safety and Security for Social Media Influencers.

With the goal to strengthen the capacity of social media influencers to collectively respond and counter anti-rights narratives, agendas and SRHR backlash online, Sanyu Mulungi, the Communications and Advocacy Lead at HER Internet facilitated a session on Digital Safety and Security on Tuesday 27th May 2025 in Kampala. The session was designed to cover; the understanding the digital threats and privacy concerns specially the escalation of misinformation and disinformation, digital surveillance and censorship, as well as, impacts and mitigation strategies in an endeavour to improve awareness and address the impacts of anti- rights narratives and agendas experienced by Ugandan social media influencers particularly within digital spaces.



## Launch of the 2026 - 20230 National Women's Manifesto.



Our Executive Director, Sandra Kwikiriza, was honoured to speak at the launch of the 2026-2030 National Women's Manifesto, hosted by Uganda Women's Network (UWONET). She spoke about the often overlooked connection between technological development and climate change, highlighting how data centers, which power our digital lives, consume massive amounts of water, drying up local sources and forcing women and girls to walk even longer distances to access water. She also spoke to the urgency of closing the digital gender divide not just in terms of access, but in dismantling the deeper systems that keep structurally silenced womxn excluded from power, opportunity, and digital safety. HER Internet remains committed to pushing for feminist digital and climate justice.

## Understanding Digital Safety, Rights and Internet Access In Uganda.



On July 9, 2025, our Executive Director, Sandra Kwikiriza, through the #ReCIPEProject, led an insightful session on Understanding Digital Rights. The training explored why digital skills are essential in today's world, touched on emerging technologies and civic engagement, and examined Uganda's role in the context of fourth industrial technologies. Sandra emphasized that digital literacy goes beyond access, it's about empowering people to create, share, and shape narratives through tools like blogs, videos, graphic design, and digital storytelling. She also reminded participants that "everyone has a right to safety online and should be free from bullying when they are online." The session was streamed live on Civic Space TV and remains available for replay via : [youtube.com/live/i4lwopID](https://youtube.com/live/i4lwopID)

## Understanding Digital Safety, Rights and Internet Access In Uganda.



On July 18th, 2025, Sandra Kwikiriza, Executive Director of HER Internet, joined a dynamic panel of thinkers and organizers at The Kimeeza! 1st Edition, a space dedicated to unpacking the politics of inclusion. Speaking to the theme "Reimagining Inclusion, Power, and the Future of Organizing," Drawing from both personal and political experience, she explored how language shapes our realities, warning that terms like "marginalized" can unintentionally uphold exclusion. She also reflected on the complex trade-off between visibility and safety, especially for structurally silenced communities. "Being seen can come at the cost of harm," she said. "True inclusion means creating spaces that protect, affirm, and allow power to shift." The conversation set a bold tone for what feminist organizing must continue to grapple with in digital and physical spaces alike. Watch the conversation via: <https://bit.ly/3TMpd2o>



## Understanding The Cost of Activism and Strengthening Digital Resilience For LBQT WHRDS In Uganda.

Sandra Kwikiriza, Executive Director at HER Internet facilitated a session on “Building collective digital resilience” at a workshop which was convened by Women Human Rights Defenders Network Uganda (WHRDN-U) in Kampala under the theme “Understanding the cost of activism and strengthening digital resilience for LBQT WHRDs in Uganda”. The event aimed at equipping WHRDs with critical knowledge and skills to navigate Uganda’s repressive landscape while fostering stronger collaboration and resilience in their advocacy efforts especially in online spaces. During the expert-led discussions, participants analyzed the cost of advocacy, emerging digital activism trends, security measures and tactics for resilience as they navigate advocacy and activism online despite the restrictive context.

## Safe Internet Day 2025.

This year’s theme for Safe Internet Day 2025 “Together for a Better Internet” served as a global reminder of the urgent need for collective action to address the growing risks faced by vulnerable groups especially minors in an increasingly digital world. In commemoration of the 16th edition of Safer Internet Day, Aydia Gender and Technology Initiative hosted a distinguished panel of speakers to an X Space conversation on 11th February 2025. Supported by DefendDefenders, this virtual event aimed at promoting safer and responsible utilization of the internet and other digital technologies for all users especially children and young adults. Listen to reflective insights from the speakers of this dialogue via;

<https://x.com/i/spaces/1djxXVeWEWPGZ>



## **Linking and Learning workshop on Online Media Advocacy and Community Care Services.**

We attended the Linking and Learning Workshop on Online Media Advocacy and Community Care Services that was hosted by Proud Legends Initiative in Kampala on Wednesday 30th April 2025. The hybrid convening was designed to create a space for collective reflection, strategic conversation and facilitate peer learning among Power of Pride project implementing partners across Uganda particularly in the areas of online media campaigns, podcasts, and community- centered advocacy. It was also an opportunity for the participants to use the platform co-develop a joint community-led media campaign and strategy that will be implemented through inter- organizational collaboration.

## **Countering Backlash: Multi-stakeholder's Convening on Shrinking Civic Feminist Organizing Online.**

Diana Karungi, the Programs Director at HER Internet participated in a multi-stakeholder convening under the Countering Backlash program hosted by Women of Uganda Network (WOUGNET) in Kampala on Friday 14th March 2025. The meeting convened various civil society actors to strengthen WOUGNET's research efforts on strategies to push against the backlash on civic feminist organizing in Uganda particularly in online spaces, foster informed advocacy and collective action through analyzing the growing challenges and exploring the available effective strategies for resistance.





## The 18th eLearning Africa Conference and Exhibition 2025.



Mulungi Sanyu, Communications Director at HER Internet, attended the 18th eLearning Africa Conference and Exhibition, held from May 7-9, 2025, in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. Held under the theme “Reimagining Education and Human Capital Development for Africa’s Prosperity,” the conference spotlighted the urgent need to invest in inclusive, transformative learning opportunities. This space brought together digital education leaders, innovators, and activists from across the continent, and served as a key platform for amplifying voices often left out of conversations around digital transformation and #WomxnInTech.

## Stakeholder Engagement Meeting: Strengthening SRHR Access and Advocacy For LGBTQ Womxn In Rural Uganda.

On Tuesday 10th June 2025, the Programs Director at HER Internet, Diana Karungi participated in stakeholders’ engagement meeting titled “Strengthening Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) access and advocacy for LGBTQ womxn in rural Uganda that was held by Africa Queer Network (AQNET) in Kampala. The event convened key stakeholders in civil society organizations, healthcare and LGBTQ community with the purpose to establish a shared understanding, collectively explore the goals, share implementation strategies and foster collaborative partnerships following the introduction of a new six-month research project which seeks to address the gaps, advance inclusion and access to essential services and information in relation to SRHR for structurally silenced communities of womxn specially LBQT womxn based in rural areas through community-led engagement, evidence-based information and advocacy interventions.



## The Uganda Internet Governance Forum (UIGF) 2025.

Our Communications Director, Mulungi Sanyu, at HER Internet 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.



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