

Tighten online safety rules for children

A NEW report has revealed that children using online platforms (49%) have accessed pornography.

This is a warning the Government, parents and leaders at all levels can no longer afford to ignore. It is an urgent call to action.

The 'Disrupting Harm' report released by Safe Online, a global investment vehicle dedicated to keeping children safe in the digital world, paints a picture of children exposed to online violent scenes, sexual content, predatory strangers, and misleading ideas about relationships.

The situation is worsened by absence of parental guidance. The Uganda Communications Commission reported as far back as 2020 that 70% of children use the Internet without meaningful parental supervision.

The regional trends are equally disturbing. Online sexual exploitation cases in Africa rose by 25% last year, with South Africa and Kenya recording spikes of 30% in child sexual abuse material. Uganda is not insulated from these threats.



EDITORIAL

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They must build platforms with child safety at their core. Stronger age verification, more effective content moderation, and swift removal of child-exploitative material must become the standard.

But this is not only a government and technology industry issue. Parents, teachers and community leaders must reclaim their role in guiding children through the digital confusion. Silence is no longer an option.

Open, trusted conversations will help children to open up and report uncomfortable online experiences. Digital literacy, taught at home and in school, must become a basic life skill. We cannot continue treating online safety as an afterthought.

The children encountering pornography today are the adults who will shape our society tomorrow. If we allow their earliest exposure to relationships and identity to be dictated by harmful stereotypes, violent scenes, and sexualised content, we will have failed them long before they fail us. We need stricter rules, better enforcement, smarter technology, and more dedicated parents and teachers.

This is why the Government must now tighten and rigorously enforce digital safety rules.

Regulators must ensure that online platforms, broadcasters, and content creators follow child-sensitive standards and actively weed out harmful sexual content.

Technology companies cannot be left to self-regulate.