

CREATORS FEATURE CHILDREN TO ATTRACT MORE LIKES, VIEWS

By Jacky Achan

A lady beauty salon attendant is plaiting a client's hair, but her one-year-old boy is crying ceaselessly. To stop the child doing so, she hands him a phone. The mother switches on TikTok videos.

"Each time the phone was pulled away, the child cried even louder," recounted Hadijah Mwanje, the executive director of High Sound for Children, who witnessed the entire event.

"I told the mother, please, that boy is not supposed to be viewing the content he is watching," Mwanje recalled. The response was immediate and honest: "Auntie, it's true, but I need to work."

That incident pointed to a much bigger issue. As Mwanje was addressing the media during World Children's Day, marked annually on November 20, she said society was never prepared for this level of digital exposure.

"There is so much excitement around technology, yet many of us were never guided on how to manage it," she said.

BOUNDARIES, NOT BANS

Setting boundaries around smartphone use is not about

SMARTPHONE BOUNDARIES: WHY ACCOUNTABILITY MATTERS



completely denying children access to technology; it is about accountability. Mwanje believes that if each adult played their role, fewer children would be exposed to harmful content.

She points to a TikTok account known as Mr Tuk Ug, which uses a child to communicate various messages. The matter has even



Equipping children with knowledge of how to differentiate good from bad content is a better strategy than banning digital media

been raised with the Uganda Communications Commission. While many creators believe

featuring children attracts more likes and views, Mwanje asked: "But at what cost?"

She said parents must learn to think long-term.

"Ten or 15 years from now, will these children be proud of the content shared about them? As conversations around digital footprints grow louder, the reality is clear. For today's children, their online footprint is permanent," Mwanje said.

Damon Wamara, the executive director of the Uganda Child Rights Non-Governmental Organisation Network, offers another layer to the conversation. He argued that shielding children entirely from the media is unrealistic.

The real solution lies in training and guidance, he said.

"Children must be taught how to tell good content from bad," he said.

As phones become unavoidable and schools increasingly require tablets and online systems, parents are left navigating unfamiliar territory. Rules on screen time, supervised viewing and age-appropriate content are becoming essential tools, not options.

"The issue is not removing children from the digital world, but raising them with the ability to choose what is good and walk away from what is not," Wamara concluded.

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