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How online businesses were hit by Internet shutdown

KAMPALA: The recent Internet shutdown brought business to a standstill for online food hubs, e-commerce platforms, digital transport services, and mobile money operators, leaving thousands of young Ugandans without income and customers stranded.

Among the hardest hit were online food delivery services such as Glovo, where operations depend entirely on internet connectivity. Food points that once buzzed with constant orders fell silent as customers were unable to log in and place requests.

Mr Paul Musinguzi, 28, a Glovo boda rider, said the shutdown wiped out his only source of income.

"Before the shutdown, I used to make about 15 rides a day, earning around

Shs50,000. When the internet went off, I was left stranded because this is what I depend on to support my family," he said.

Another rider, Mr Ronald John Baptist, described the shutdown as abrupt and devastating.

"I lost about Shs170,000 during that time. Even now, business has not fully recovered because customers still struggle to access the Internet. It's a very hard time for food delivery," he said.

Online shopping disrupted

The shutdown also affected online shopping platforms such as Jumia, which rely entirely on Internet access to connect buyers and sellers. Mr Im-

ran Musani, a sales agent based in Kabalagala, said he lost about Shs600,000 in sales.

"People were getting used to online shopping because of its convenience. When the Internet was shut down, everything stopped, and my sales dropped completely," he said.

Customers were equally frustrated. Ms Harriet Mirembe, 38, who regularly shops online for household items, described the shutdown as unfair to citizens.

"I had visitors at home and needed blankets urgently. I couldn't order anything online. This is a disservice to the public," she said. •

Digital transport services grounded transport technology companies were

not spared either. Safe Boda, a digital platform offering motorcycle taxi and car-hailing services, was forced to halt operations.

Mr Rapa Thomason Ricky, a co-founder of the company, said the platform, which serves more than 4,000 customers, was completely paralysed.

"As a business, we earn commissions from every ride. With the internet off, there was nothing we could do. Orders stopped, yet we still had workers who needed salaries," he said.

He added that attempts to create offline alternatives were unsuccessful due to limited resources.

Mobile money, forex businesses

Mobile money and foreign exchange

services also suffered significant losses. Ms Joan Nahabwe, who has worked in mobile money and forex exchange for four years, said the shutdown left both businesses and customers helpless.

"Many customers had money but could not access it because everything requires the internet. We had no backup system," she said, adding that losses accumulated during the four-day shutdown.

The internet blackout highlighted the heavy reliance of Uganda's growing digital economy on stable connectivity. For many young entrepreneurs and workers, the shutdown translated into lost income, stalled investments, and growing uncertainty about the future of online businesses.