

# NEWSFLASH



8th - 13<sup>th</sup> March 2026

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## Women Entrepreneurs Urged to Scale Up at Zoho Women in Business Summit



Women entrepreneurs were encouraged to pursue bold visions for their enterprises during the Women in Business Summit organized by Zoho Corporation, an event that brought together business leaders, innovators, and entrepreneurs to discuss growth, digital transformation, and opportunities for women-led enterprises.

Among the distinguished panelists was Veronica Namwanje, the Executive Secretary of Uganda Small Scale Industries Association (USSIA). During the discussion, she emphasized the importance of ambition, resilience, and strategic planning for women who are building and scaling their businesses.

Speaking to participants at the summit, Namwanje encouraged women entrepreneurs to cultivate big dreams and pursue them with confidence. She noted that while many women start businesses with limited resources, having a clear vision and the courage to expand can transform small enterprises into sustainable and competitive ventures.

“Women must allow themselves to dream beyond survival businesses. When you dream big, you begin to plan big, invest big, and eventually grow big,” she said.

The Women in Business Summit continues to serve as an important platform for empowering women entrepreneurs, fostering collaboration, and encouraging innovation within the business community

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## Unity, Culture, and Empowerment Mark

### International Women's Day Celebrations in Nakivale

Color, culture, and a strong message of empowerment defined the celebrations of International Women's Day at Nakivale Refugee Settlement, where development partners, community leaders, refugees, and host communities gathered to honor the contributions and resilience of women.

During the event, the Uganda Small Scale Industries Association (USSIA) joined other partners under the LEAD Project to commemorate the day and highlight the importance of empowering women through entrepreneurship, skills development, and access to opportunities.

This year's national celebrations were held under the theme "Scaling up investment to accelerate access to justice for all women and girls in Uganda," emphasizing the need for stronger support systems, resources, and policies that ensure women and girls can fully exercise their rights and participate in economic and social development.

By participating in the celebrations at Nakivale, USSIA reaffirmed its dedication to supporting women entrepreneurs, promoting inclusive development, and working alongside partners to ensure that women in both refugee and host communities have the tools, knowledge, and opportunities needed to thrive.



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## Empowering Women, Strengthening Communities at Kyaka II Refugee Settlement

The spirit of unity and empowerment filled Kyaka II Refugee Settlement today as communities gathered to celebrate International Women's Day, an event dedicated to recognizing the resilience, achievements, and contributions of women across the world. The celebration brought together refugee and host community members, local leaders, development partners, and organizations committed to advancing gender equality and social inclusion.

Among the participating organizations was USSIA, which was represented by participants from the LEAD Project alongside the Regional Coordinator. Their presence highlighted the organization's ongoing commitment to strengthening women's empowerment and promoting inclusive opportunities within refugee-hosting communities.

As the celebration concluded, the message of solidarity and shared progress remained clear: when women are supported and empowered, entire communities benefit. Events like these continue to strengthen partnerships and reaffirm the commitment to ensuring that women and girls in both refugee and host communities are given the opportunities they deserve.



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## Dialogue on Digital Tax Stamps Sparks Calls for Fairer Tax Policies for Small Industries

Stakeholders from Uganda's small-scale manufacturing sector gathered today at the head office of the Uganda Small Scale Industries Association to discuss the growing impact of Digital Tax Stamps (DTS) on small industries across the country. The meeting created an important platform for industry players to share experiences, raise concerns, and propose practical solutions aimed at improving the business environment for small manufacturers.

Through such consultations, stakeholders expressed optimism that collaborative policy reforms can strengthen the sector, enabling small industries to contribute even more significantly to employment creation, innovation, and economic development in Uganda.

The discussion focused on the theme “Digital Tax Stamps: How They Impact Small Scale Industries in Uganda.” Participants examined how the system affects production costs, compliance processes, and the overall competitiveness of small enterprises. While acknowledging the role of Digital Tax Stamps in strengthening tax administration and curbing counterfeit products, members emphasized that the current implementation presents significant challenges for emerging and small-scale manufacturers.

During the meeting, stakeholders highlighted several policy reforms they believe would better support the sector. Among the key proposals was the exemption of start-up businesses from excise duty, a move that members said would allow new enterprises to stabilize and grow before facing full tax obligations. Participants also recommended the introduction of excise duty refunds similar to VAT refunds, which could help manufacturers recover costs and maintain cash flow.



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## Partners Unite to Strengthen Gender-Responsive and Refugee-Centered Programming

A renewed commitment to inclusive development took center stage during a Gender and Refugee Inclusion workshop held at the National ICT Innovation Hub in Nakawa. Organized by Enabel, the engagement brought together implementing partners under the WeWork: ReadyForTracing project to deepen collaboration and strengthen strategies that ensure development initiatives benefit everyone—especially women and refugee communities.

Discussions focused on critical safeguarding and protection issues, including Gender-Based Violence (GBV), Gender-Based Discrimination (GBD), and Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment (SEAH). Participants examined how organizations can strengthen prevention measures, establish safe reporting channels, and promote accountability systems that protect vulnerable groups within development programs.



Beyond policy discussions, the workshop emphasized transformative approaches to inclusion. Partners explored strategies to ensure refugees are not only beneficiaries but active contributors to economic and social initiatives.



As conversations at the workshop demonstrated, sustainable development requires more than economic progress—it demands safe spaces, equitable opportunities, and intentional inclusion. Through partnerships like the WeWork: ReadyForTracing project, organizations are working together to ensure that innovation, empowerment, and protection remain at the heart of community development efforts.

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## Shaping the Future of Business Development Services in Uganda



A multi-stakeholder dialogue aimed at strengthening the professionalization of Business Development Services (BDS) in Uganda was recently held at Hotel Africana. The meeting brought together representatives from government institutions, private sector organizations, development partners, and Business Development Service providers to discuss the progress and future direction of BDS in the country.

One of the key highlights of the discussion was the progress made in developing national standards for Business Development Services, a process being led by the Uganda National Bureau of Standards. These standards are expected to play a critical role in strengthening the capacity of BDS providers while ensuring that Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) receive consistent, high-quality advisory and support services.

The dialogue concluded with a shared commitment among stakeholders to continue collaborating in building a professional, credible, and impactful BDS sector that supports the growth and resilience of businesses across the country.



The dialogue also highlighted ongoing efforts to develop a National BDS Policy, which is expected to provide a structured framework for coordinating and regulating Business Development Services in Uganda. Once established, the policy will guide stakeholders in creating a more organized and sustainable BDS ecosystem that effectively responds to the needs of MSMEs.

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## Field Visit Highlights Opportunities and Challenges for Small Enterprises in Mbarara



A field visit to several small businesses in Mbarara provided an opportunity to engage directly with entrepreneurs and better understand the realities they face in sustaining and growing their enterprises. The visit was conducted by the Regional Coordinator together with the Zonal Chairperson for Mbarara under the Uganda Small Scale Industries Association, reinforcing ongoing efforts to stay connected with members at the grassroots level.

One of the businesses visited was Jane Weaving, a local enterprise specializing in weaving products that contributes to local craftsmanship and provides livelihood opportunities through handmade items; the team also engaged with Mugisha's Herbal Clinic, which produces and provides traditional herbal remedies to the community while supporting small-scale enterprise development; finally, they visited Esperaza Distributors, a distribution business that strengthens the regional supply chain by connecting producers with markets.

Despite operating in different sectors, the entrepreneurs shared common challenges affecting their growth and sustainability, including rising operational costs due to expensive raw materials and utilities, the heavy tax burden on small and medium enterprises, and limited access to affordable financing, which restricts their ability to expand and scale up operations.

The visit provided an important opportunity for the leadership team to listen to members, understand their needs, and identify areas where advocacy and support can be strengthened.

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## UPCOMING ACTIVITIES

# Juice Training



### JUICES YOU WILL LEARN:

- Mojito
- Natural juices
- Milk shakes
- cocktails and mocktail

**Fee: shs 100,000**



 **Friday, 28th March 2026**

 **USSIA Offices, UMA showgrounds Lugogo**

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