

# UNDERSTANDING COPYRIGHT

The Legal Rhythm Behind  
Every Creative Beat

APRIL 26 WORLD  
INTELLECTUAL  
PROPERTY DAY 2025

**FEEL THE  
BEAT  
OF IP**



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## The Legal Rhythm Behind Every Creative Beat



In the heart of Kampala, a young Afro-fusion producer named WEB drops a viral track. It dominates radio airwaves, gets remixed by DJs, and goes viral on TikTok across Africa. But before WEB can fully enjoy his moment, he notices his track being used commercially without permission and without credit. Sound familiar?

Welcome to the world of copyright a critical branch of intellectual property law that protects original creative works and empowers their creators.

Copyright refers to a bundle of exclusive legal rights granted to the creators of original literary, scientific and artistic works. In Uganda, these rights are governed by the Copyright and Neighbouring Rights Act, Cap. 222 and its accompanying regulations.

At its core, copyright law seeks to strike a balance; encouraging creativity and innovation by granting creators control over their work while also ensuring public access to knowledge and culture.

Copyright ownership can rest with a variety of industry players, including;

- Individual creators (e.g., authors, musicians, artists)
- Companies (especially where works are created in the course of employment)
- Joint authors (e.g., a lyricist and a composer collaborating on a song)

Copyright protects several works, such as; Literary works (books, poems, scripts), Artistic works (paintings, drawings, photography), Musical compositions and recordings, Audiovisual creations (films, documentaries) and Derivative works (adaptations, translations, etc.).

### Idea vs. Expression: A Crucial Distinction

A foundational principle of copyright law is the idea-expression dichotomy.

Ideas are free. Expressions of those ideas are protected.

Take WEB for example, his idea to fuse certain beats is not protected but the final recorded song is. This distinction promotes freedom of thought and prevents monopolisation of ideas, ensuring that culture and creativity continue to thrive in our society.

### Economic and Moral Rights: Protecting Both Value and Voice

Copyright protection gives a creator two primary sets of rights:

#### 1. Economic Rights

These allow creators to commercially exploit their work by selling, licensing, performing, reproducing, adapting, or broadcasting it. These rights are transferrable and are protected in Uganda, either for the lifetime of the author plus 50 years or where it is a joint authorship, for 50 years after the death of the last surviving author.

#### 2. Moral Rights

Moral rights on the other hand, protect the creator's personal link to the work. They include the right to be credited as the author and to object to any distortion, mutilation or misuse of the work.

These rights are nontransferable and recognise a creator's dignity and personality as embedded in their work.

### Understanding Neighbouring (related) rights

While copyright protects the original creators of a work like composers and lyricist, neighbouring rights (also known as related rights) extend protection to those who play a vital supporting role in the creation, production and dissemination of that work. These rights ensure that contributors beyond the original author also receive legal recognition and economic benefit for their contributions.

Once WEB's song is composed, performed, recorded and shared with the world, various other parties become rights holders. Let us explore who these are and what rights they would hold:

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### 1. Performers

These include singers, instrumentalists, dancers, and actors, who bring creative works to life. Neighbouring rights will grant them the right to authorise the fixation (recording) of their live performances, to be identified and credited as performers and to control reproduction, distribution and public performance of those recordings.

### 2. Producers

These are the individuals or entities that finance and organise the recording process, often investing heavily in studio time, equipment and post-production. Their neighbouring rights include the right to authorise reproduction of the sound recording and control the distribution and public availability of the recording. This ensures producers are compensated for their investment and effort in bringing musical work to the market.

### 3. Broadcasters

Radio and television broadcasters play a key role in transmitting creative content to the public. Their rights stem from their efforts to assemble, schedule and transmit programming. A broadcaster will be able to control their broadcast signal and authorise or prohibit the retransmission or rebroadcasting of their content. These rights help broadcasters protect the value of their signal and programming schedules.

### 4. Directors

Directors of audiovisual works, performances and recordings contribute critical creative vision and coordination. Neighbouring rights entitle them to credit as directors wherever the work is used or shared and have their name associated with the work in all forms of broadcast or distribution. This protects the integrity of the director's contribution and ensures appropriate recognition.

All neighbouring rights in Uganda are protected for 50 years from the date of the relevant performance, recording or broadcast, in line with international standards.

By understanding these layers of protection, creators and collaborators alike can better navigate ownership, licensing and compensation within the creative industries.

Although copyright protection arises automatically upon creation of an original work, registration with the Uganda Registration Services Bureau (URSB) offers important advantages, key to which is legal proof of ownership.

In addition, execution of contracts for publishing, licensing, broadcasting or public performance is essential. Clear agreements help prevent disputes and ensure all parties understand their rights and revenue shares.

Whether you're a songwriter, screenwriter, sculptor or digital artist, understanding your copyright is non-negotiable. It is the legal rhythm behind every beat, brushstroke, script or dance routine.

This World IP Month, we celebrate creators like WEB and reaffirm the importance of legal protections that help amplify their voices and ensure their work is respected.

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## TMT/IP & SUSTAINABILITY TEAM



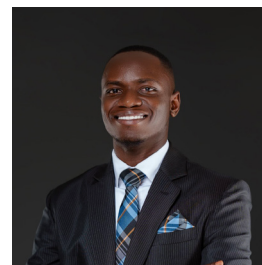
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