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JLOS Justice for All

Special Edition on E-Justice

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A Digital Justice Ecosystem Promoting Social-Economic Transformation

INSIDE

Contents

Editors' Note

Towards a people-centred, digitally enabled, and integrated access to justice service delivery system

Justice, Law, and Order Services (JLOS) have been recognised in the NDP III and Vision 2040 as a key pillar in Uganda's socio-economic transformation. Technology provides opportunities and new realities that improve the quality and quantity of access to justice through the empowerment of people and communities, and the provision of people-centred (digitally delivered) justice services.

The overarching goal of JLOS' e-Justice strategy is to provide a harmonised vision, framework and direction to digital transformation efforts spanning eighteen (18) institutions under the access to justice sub-programme. There is therefore an urgent need to harmonize efforts and have a coordinated approach to automation, augmented by the significant level of interoperability in the chain of justice. This shall set the stage for improved business processes, facilitate data and information sharing, and enhance collaboration and efficiency through integrated information systems.

JLOS' e-justice agenda is focused on harmonizing all existing, ongoing, and future initiatives geared at leveraging technology by eliminating digital silos, streamlining processes, enabling joint workflow between JLOS institutions, and promoting digital innovation to improve public satisfaction, deepen institutional trust and ensure transparency and accountability.

In this edition of the JLOS Bulletin, we shine a spotlight on several e-justice interventions in our front-line institutions showcasing the value of digital transformation in facilitating case management, improving productivity, creating efficiencies by streamlining business processes and significantly contributing to improved service delivery.

We also bring you unique insights, experiences, perspectives, and opinions from a cross-section of stakeholders who are at the forefront of the digital revolution in JLOS.

For any comments or feedback, contact the editorial team via email. We will be thrilled to hear from you.

Rachel Odoi-Musoke
rodoi@jlos.go.ug

Sam Rogers Wairagala
swairagala@jlos.go.ug

Barbara Kitui
bkitui@jlos.go.ug

Edgar Kuhimbisa
ekuhimbisa@jlos.go.ug

Editorial Team

Rachel Odoi-Musoke
Sam Rogers Wairagala
Barbara Kitui
Edgar Kuhimbisa

Publishing Consultant

ANVII Holding Limited

Design & Layout

Louis Mpora

Contributors

Hon. Justice Geoffrey Kiryabwire
Col. Geoffrey Brian Kambere
Patricia Aima Okou
Timothy Kakuru
SP Isaiah Igumira
SSP Jimmy Haguma
Barbara Kitui
Julius Peter Torach
Daniel Kashoma
Arthur Kwesiga
Joanita Nsasiirwe Success
Edgar Kuhimbisa

Published by

Governance and Security Programme (JLOS) Secretariat
Ministry of Justice and Constitutional Affairs
Baumann House, Parliament Avenue
P.O BOX 7183, Kampala
Phone: 0414253207
Email: connect@jlos.go.ug
Website: www.jlos.go.ug

Edgar Kuhimbisa, Advisor E-Governance at the Governance and Security Programme (JLOS) Secretariat.

Digitising the Justice System in Uganda

Empowering communities with people-centred access to justice services and mechanisms to resolve their justice and legal challenges is critical to the overall growth and development of societies. This is echoed in the United Nations Global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) – particularly SDG 16.3 which calls for "equal access to justice for all" with a pledge to leave no one behind underlined in a vision of a "just, equitable, tolerant, open and socially inclusive world in which the needs of the most vulnerable are met".

By Edgar Kuhimbisa

Access to justice, rule of law and protection of human rights is identified as a key pillar of Uganda's national agenda of social-economic transformation as articulated in Vision 2040 and the National Development Plan (NDP III). Access to Justice Institutions (delivering Justice, Law and Order Services) under the Governance and Security Programme are individually and collectively leading this noble cause through innovative people-centred services.

Core to Uganda's justice reform programme is leveraging digital technologies to enhance access to justice through the provision of information that helps people understand the law and their human rights and the provision of one-stop digital platforms. The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic across the globe in late 2019, more than ever before underlined the need to automate Government functions and provide digital services to citizens with limited physical interaction barriers associated with traditional service delivery approaches.

Faced with the reality of service point closures in the wake of rising COVID-19 cases and stringent public restrictions on travel, Access to Justice Institutions in Uganda turned to technology as a viable option to ensure a considerable form of business continuity. Courts and Prisons rolled out video conferencing facilities and platforms for online case hearings. The Uganda Registration Services Bureau (URSB) leveraged its several years of investment in ICTs for the continued execution of its function through online service provision especially at the business registry. These e-services include filing of annual returns by business entities, business name search, company registration and tracking of application status. The

National Identification and Registration Authority (NIRA) and the Directorate of Citizenship and Immigration Control (DCIC) continued to offer online service options regarding national identity card and passport issuance as well as permit and visa processing respectively. Rather than shut down services completely, JLOS institutions quickly adapted to the "new normal" by moving the bulk of their business online via digital tools and platforms.

The pandemic served as a wake-up call for the Government and the justice sector to integrate technology in its service delivery model. While the overall "digital response" to the pandemic by JLOS institutions was generally limited (with a few exceptions), important lessons have been learned. These include the need to have a coherent and harmonised digital strategy across the "chain of justice" with a focus on shared services and systems integration to facilitate data exchange and collaboration; and the need to extend the benefits of digital access to justice services to citizens by creating "digital spaces" that enable public access to information and legal support.

Digital transformation of access to justice faces several challenges. These include lack of Internet connectivity at the local level (upcountry locations and hard-to-reach areas) in courts, prisons, Police stations, offices of the Resident State Attorney, NIRA, and immigration services (DCIC); limited digital skills among many JLOS staff; limited resources to scale up digital projects across the country (for institutions with offices at district and regional levels); mind-set change issues (technology adoption); and a siloed approach to digital transformation (lack of a common framework/strategy for a harmonised digitisation of functions of JLOS institutions.

However, through a unified e-Justice Strategy, there is unprecedented momentum to refine and reform business processes; develop and strengthen ICT infrastructure; enhance the capacity of frontline workers with digital skills; automate access to justice business processes; and creation of a digital "justice network" through integration of information systems in both the civil and criminal justice domains.

Justice and legal challenges experienced by people have a net negative impact on their overall social and economic well-being by limiting personal productivity, contributing to loss of income and poor health. Collectively, the associated cost of unresolved justice challenges may ultimately slow growth and development with a strong possibility of breeding unrest and conflict in communities. Digitisation of the justice system is one step toward confronting these challenges through enhanced productivity of judicial officers, prosecutors, lawyers, and investigating officers to effectively handle cases (real-time availability of information to execute tasks and data-driven decision-making); enhance access to justice for all especially the vulnerable and marginalised (through simplified and user-friendly digital justice service points); and enhanced accountability and transparency. This translates into increased public satisfaction, confidence and trust in institutions to dispense and administer justice.

Going forward, there is a need for concerted efforts to create a strong enabling environment for digital justice service delivery through strengthening governance structures, prioritisation of digital initiatives for funding, developing a strong legal and regulatory framework and building partnerships with the private sector and non-state actors.

But more critically, there is a need for strong and bold leadership across Government (and JLOS in particular) at all levels to champion the digital transformation process and lead the change toward digitally-driven access to justice service delivery. JLOS

Edgar Kuhimbisa is the Technical Advisor (e-governance) at the Governance and Security Programme (JLOS) Secretariat, Ministry of Justice, and Constitutional Affairs. Email. ekuhimbisa@jlos.go.ug

Electronic Policing: Harnessing technology in crime prevention, detection, and investigation

By SSP Jimmy Haguma

H.E President Yoweri Museveni with Police Officers at a recent public function.

Electronic policing, also known as e-Policing, Smart Policing or Digital Policing, often delves into harnessing the use of technology in various aspects of law enforcement, including crime prevention, detection, and investigation. This continuous advancement in information technology such as data analysis or science, surveillance systems, artificial intelligence, machine learning and communication tools is an enabler to effective and efficient policing.

> **In October 2022, the UPF resolved to embark on a holistic digital transformation journey through the Electronic Policing Information System (ePIS) Project**

E-Policing can also be referred to as the combination of intelligent implementation of innovations in policing technology while leveraging existing policing strategies such as Intelligence-led Policing, Hotspot Policing, Problem-oriented Policing and Predictive policing for crime prevention and crime investigation. Conversely, the rate of e-policing success depends heavily on attributes such as adequate technological infrastructure, technological skills, governance, and financial support.

The Uganda Police Force (UPF) is not an exception to the e-policing journey. The UPF has over the years undertaken strides in digitisation of its processes but is desirous to leverage more of the technical capabilities to develop smart approaches to fulfil its cardinal mandate as stipulated in the Constitution and the Police Act.

In October 2022, the UPF embarked on a holistic digital transformation journey through the Electronic Policing Information System (ePIS) Project. The ePIS project is premised on the automation of policing business processes and functions in the criminal justice ecosystem while leveraging emerging technologies of the 4th and 5th Industrial Revolution, that include predicting policing, digital forensic science, cybersecurity, and community engagements.

E-Policing will facilitate seamless communication and information sharing among law enforcement agencies at local, national, and international levels. Secure communication channels and databases will allow for real-time sharing of intelligence, collaboration on investigations, and coordination of efforts to tackle cross-border crimes. The same shall be leveraged by other Ministries, Departments and Agencies for collaboration and decision support systems.

Geographic Information Systems (GIS) shall be used to map crime hotspots, visualize crime patterns, and identify areas with high crime rates. This information helps law enforcement agencies to deploy resources strategically and implement targeted interventions in specific geographic areas.

With reference to the UPF Annual Crime Report of 2023, ePIS will leverage such datasets for public-facing information systems to strengthen community-oriented policing in crime-prone hotspots and as well as evaluate the effectiveness of the JLOS ecosystem.

In an increasingly interconnected world, electronic policing plays a crucial role in combating cyber threats and preventing terrorist activities. Law enforcement agencies tend to work closely with cybersecurity experts to safeguard critical infrastructure, investigate cybercrimes, and disrupt terrorist networks operating online. Pursuant to the enforcement of the cyber laws in Uganda, the ePIS project will work as a supportive mechanism to combat such threats and provide support to other players in the sector.

Predictive policing involves the use of advanced analytics and machine learning algorithms to forecast when and where crimes are likely to occur. These algorithms analyse historical crime data, demographics, weather patterns, and other relevant factors to identify potential crime hotspots. By identifying high-risk areas, law enforcement agencies can allocate resources more efficiently and implement targeted interventions to prevent crimes before they happen. This appears like a dream, but with organised data and systems, prediction will become a reality.

Many crimes today have international dimensions, requiring collaboration among law enforcement agencies across borders. Electronic policing efforts often involve cooperation with international partners, sharing of intelligence and resources, and coordination of joint operations to combat transnational crimes such as human trafficking, drug trafficking, cybercrimes, and terrorism. Interpol and other international law enforcement organisations play a crucial role in facilitating such collaboration.

While electronic policing holds promise for enhancing law enforcement capabilities and addressing security challenges, it is important to ensure that these efforts are implemented in a manner that is cognisant of the Data Protection and Privacy laws that emphasise the observance and respect for human rights, promote transparency, and addresses the specific needs and context of local communities.

Digital transformation in law enforcement adds value to other institutions in the criminal justice chain by promoting collaboration, efficiency, data-driven decision-making, and ultimately, better outcomes for individuals and communities involved in the justice system.

Continued investment in technology, capacity building, and collaboration is crucial for realising the full potential of electronic policing in the Uganda Police Force. By leveraging technology effectively, stakeholders can address systemic challenges, enhance public safety, and promote fairness and accountability in the administration of justice. JLOS

The author is the Senior Superintendent of Police at the Uganda Police Force (Directorate of Information and Communications Technology).

Digital transformation in law enforcement adds value to other institutions in the criminal justice chain by promoting collaboration, efficiency, and data-driven decision-making.

Role of Forensic Science in Modern Policing

A forensic Lab at the Directorate of Forensics in Naguru, Kampala.

By SP Isaiah Igumira

As crime becomes more sophisticated, we the investigators, who are mandated by law to detect and prevent crime need to swiftly move to counter this emerging dynamic by adopting scientific mechanisms of carrying out investigations leveraging ICTs and Forensic Science"

The term "forensic science" describes the place where science and law intersect. Data developed by forensic crime laboratories are called forensic data and are typically collected, analysed, and reported on a case-by-case basis for criminal investigations and presentation in criminal court proceedings. As the world evolves, the field of forensics keeps evolving and advancing with respect to techniques and advancements in forensic technologies that are making a difference every day in criminal courts.

Forensic intelligence involves gathering and using data earlier in the criminal inquiry cycle and across cases, to help detect, prevent, investigate, and prosecute crime – notably serial and violent crimes. Incorporating forensic data into crime analysis can help identify links, patterns, and trends or correlate other information pertinent to the criminal activity. This results in actionable intelligence that can then be used to disrupt and prevent crime, particularly serial and violent crime. Therefore, harnessing relevant technological developments in this field makes it possible to have a well-balanced and developed affair for these aspects respectively.

The integration of technology in the development and application of these forensics, equips Forensic Services experts with more advanced

Illustration of a scene of crime

scientific techniques in the prevention, investigation, and detection of crime in support of the administration of justice.

Therefore, as the Criminal Investigations Directorate (CID) whose mandate is to investigate crime, we need to support interventions such as the Electronic Policing Information System (ePIS) Project. ePIS seeks to create a digital-driven policing ecosystem that automates case management processes across the UPF and provides mechanisms for data and information sharing in support of crime detection, investigation, and prevention. By enabling the sharing of data across the Police and with stakeholders such as the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions (ODPP); Judiciary; Prisons; National Identification and Registration Authority (NIRA); Immigration and Citizenship Control (DCIC); Uganda Registration and Services Bureau (URSB); Uganda Revenue Authority (URA); the Ministry of Lands; Ministry of Works; Government Analytical Laboratory (DGAL) and private sector entities (Telecommunication companies), CID officers shall be empowered with the right digital tools and critical information required to investigate crimes in record time (within the mandated constitutional timeframes) but also quickly detect and prevent criminal actions before they occur thereby protecting persons and property in our communities.

The Uganda Police top leadership led by the IGP, and all heads of directorates have endorsed the ePIS project that will significantly transform policing in Uganda.

> **"As crime becomes more sophisticated, we the investigators, who are mandated by law to detect and prevent crime need to swiftly move to counter this emerging dynamic by adopting scientific mechanisms of carrying out investigations leveraging ICTs and Forensic Science"**

Case law in the field of fingerprints has no well-established foundation in Ugandan. Such evidence as fingerprint or foot impressions is regarded to be circumstantial. The most popular case in this field is that of the murder of an American national Cecilia Marie, Goetz in 1998 by Richard Arinaitwe (unreported). In this case, fingerprint impressions played a very important role in reaching a logical legal conclusion in the matter.

In the case of **Mutesasira Musoke vs. Uganda,** the Supreme Court held that expert evidence (such as evidence by forensic experts) must be scrutinised and not be taken as indisputable truth. In the case of **Godi v Uganda**, the evidence of Ochom J. Mike, the Government Analyst, was used to place the appellant at the scene of crime because his report in effect showed that the soil found on the sole of the exhibited shoe matched both the mineral and chemistry profile of the soil from the scene of crime and that both the trial Court and the Court of Appeal wrongly assumed that size 39 and size 42 are in the same range. The court also considered the evidence of the ballistic expert.

Several aspects still need to be considered as far as the development of forensics is concerned. For example, the State should require that all forensic science laboratory analysts receive more advanced training and certification, especially with the evolution of technological advancements in this field. Additionally, the State should invest in building the capacity of forensics scientists through local skilling interventions and international exchange programmes. Government forensic laboratories need to be equipped with state-of-the-art equipment and forensic sciences should be encouraged and promoted in the academic space as a way of building a local pool of subject matter experts. JLOS

Isaiah Igumira is the Head of the Legal Department at the Directorate of Criminal Investigations (CID), Uganda Police Force

Application of Technology in Criminal Prosecution

By Julius Peter Torach

The Office of the Director of Public Prosecution (ODPP) in Uganda is implementing the Prosecution Case Management Information System (PROCAMIS) to enhance the storage, retrieval, and analysis of information on prosecution matters to optimise, organise, and track a prosecutor's work throughout the prosecution process. It is a centralised hub for managing cases in digital form. The prosecutors can access their files anytime and anywhere through a portal. This has improved the handling of prosecution-related information and fostered access to justice through increased access to e-data and e-records.

PROCAMIS provides a platform for secure sharing of information between prosecution, law enforcement agencies and the Judiciary. It was also set up to improve case output through the use of computer-based systems to assist with the recording of case details, tracking progress on each case and triggering reminders when actions fall due; to assist with decision-making in the selection of charges and adopting combinations of charges; to facilitate rapid transfer of case details from law enforcement through the use of computer communications systems; and to ease committal of cases to the High Court through the automatic transfer of case details and automated scheduling of case hearings. By 2023, thirty-six (36) ODPP stations had been connected to the PROCAMIS infrastructure.

The COVID-19 pandemic made the world realise the importance of the adoption of technology in all spheres of life, including criminal justice and investigations. Several platforms and tools have since emerged that criminal justice players should be aware of. These technologies have evolved to cover areas such as investigations, remote prosecution services and courtroom technologies. Effective use of technologies in investigations can immensely contribute to the successful prosecution of criminal cases.

> **Collaboration with non-governmental stakeholders including civil society organisations, and international and multi-national organisations can also boost the adoption, use and governance of emerging technologies.**

> **By 2023, thirty-six ODPP stations had been connected to the PROCAMIS infrastructure.**

The adoption of technology in prosecution case management is intended to address challenges such as staff shortages that lead to increased workload, case backlog, and staff attrition among others.

For technology implementation to be successful, it should be part and parcel of the strategic direction of an organisation and should be championed by the chief executive. This would drive other decisions related to financing; identification of suitable case management systems; technology, infrastructure and connectivity required; devices; data protection and cyber security measures; staffing; training and skills development; and the associated internal policies, regulations, and procedures. The technologies adopted should also be interoperable and integrated between the criminal justice agencies. Requirements for data governance and standards should also be adhered to. Collaboration with non-governmental

stakeholders including civil society organisations, and international and multi-national organisations can also boost the adoption, use and governance of emerging technologies.

It should also be noted that the system should be user-centred, friendly, and dependable. Its efficacy should be monitored and evaluated, and the solution enhanced to meet emerging requirements and user needs. Care should also be taken to ensure that the emerging AI and Machine Learning tools are devoid of bias and discrimination based on race, sex, or religion. Laws and regulations should be constantly reviewed to address the ever-evolving threats of technological abuse including cybercrime and unethical innovations. Furthermore, stringent laws, protocols and authentication systems should be used to address the manipulation of digital evidence, forgeries, and misrepresentations.

The lack of access to appropriate technologies including affordable Internet services, and lack of digital literacy remain major constraints in the adoption of criminal justice technologies by citizens.

In conclusion, there is a need to continually train the criminal justice players including judges, prosecutors, lawyers, and law enforcement personnel in emerging technologies and how they impact their work. Countries such as Estonia for example have started implementing AI-judge systems for handling Online Dispute Resolutions (ODR). JLOS

The author is the Commissioner of Information Technology at the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions (ODPP)

Prosecution Case Management Information System (PROCAMIS)

On November 17, 2014, The Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions (ODPP), engaged the services of Graphic Systems (U) Limited, Integrated Software Specialists (ISS) and Eastern Software Systems (ESS) to develop and supply a Prosecution Case Management Information System (PROCAMIS).

The system was officially launched on November 15, 2016, with five sites going live: ODPP Headquarters at Workers House; Anti-corruption Division (in Kololo), Buganda Road Resident State Attorney (RSA); Mukono RSA and Entebbe RSA. By December 2023, the number of ODPP office sites that can use PROCAMIS has gone to thirty six (36).

The goal of PROCAMIS is to improve on processing of court documents, provide vital reports for strategic decisions, provide notification on cases that are falling due, notification on high profile cases, providing track case progress up to post judgment that is cases for assets recovery management, providing ground for analysing quality of opinion given by the different prosecutors hence improving services delivery to the public.

The following processes were identified for automation as part of the PROCAMIS project: Case filing; Registration of case information; Case movement (horizontal and vertical); Extraordinary legal remedies (e.g., Plea Bargaining); Automatic generation of Standard Internal documents; Case processing; Court Calendar and scheduling of cases; Capture of Prosecutor's Record of Court Proceedings; Capture of Judgments; Tracking of execution of judgments; Digital archiving; and Suspect Profiling. JLOS

Justice Jane Frances Abodo, the Director of Public Prosecution.

Digitalised Legal Practice: A Young Lawyer's Perspective

By Daniel Kashoma

Having graduated from the Law Development Centre, I expected to practice my legal career just like my predecessors over the years using similar procedures of legal practice. The mode of practice included physical filing of cases in courts, drafting several pleadings with a lot of paper, serving the opposite parties and court, making follow-ups with court clerks to get hearing dates and many other procedures.

Behold, on the 25th day of January 2019, the Honourable Chief Justice Alfonse Chigamoy Owiny Dollo issued the *Constitution (Integration of ICT into the Adjudication Processes for Courts of Judicature) (Practice) Directions 2019* that were key in the integration of technology into the Legal Practice. These directions provided for the use of technology in courtrooms, and the format of electronically filed documents among others.

Furthermore, on the 1st day of March 2022, the Chief Justice presided over the launch of the *Electronic Court Case Management Information System (ECCMIS)* at the Judiciary Headquarters in Kampala. ECCMIS is a system that automates and tracks all aspects of a case life cycle from the initial stage of filing through disposition and appeals to each party for any case type. This system also involves other services like electronic payments and E-scheduling among others.

In addition, the Uganda Registration Services Bureau (URSB) in 2022 also introduced the new Online Business Registration System (OBRS). Through the OBRS, company transactions right from incorporation to other filings changed from the old physical or manual procedures to electronic processing online.

> **"Technology in the courtroom has ceased to be an option and has quickly become my new reality."**

The process of institution and filing of cases has been eased with the introduction of the ECCMIS. A litigant can file his or her case at any time of the day or night whereby the statutory limitations are adhered to.

Transportation costs of litigants, lawyers and clerks have significantly been reduced because most of the previous procedures that required physical availability at courts can be handled online.

Proper case management has also been enhanced where the system can notify a litigant or lawyer of the impending court hearing enabling him or her to comply. More so, there is proper storage of case files for proper follow-up and reference by judicial officers unlike before where due to negligence of some court staff some files would be misplaced.

Digital transformation, however, has also to some extent posed several challenges which have unfortunately hindered the usage and application of digital systems in legal practice.

The challenge of case backlog persists in the different courts in the country which was one of the challenges that the digital system intended to solve. This is also because other courts of law in some districts have not yet adopted digital systems but are still stuck in the old manual systems. Some lawyers, therefore, have also not fully appreciated the operation of the ECCMIS and still use the old manual system of filing cases.

The development and introduction of ECCMIS into legal practice and other systems such as the OBRS at URSB have no doubt "digitalised" my young career and changed it for the better. Technology in the courtroom has ceased to be an option and has quickly become my new reality. JLOS

The author is an advocate of the High Court of Uganda currently practicing law in Kampala.

Electronic Court Case Management Information System (ECCMIS)

Key modules of the Electronic Court Case Management Information System (ECCMIS).

ECCMIS is a fully featured system which automates and tracks all aspects of a case life cycle from initial filing through disposition and appeals to each party for any case type. The ECCMIS, once operational is expected to replace the Court Case Administration System (CCAS) currently used across all courts to manage cases. CCAS is currently operational at the Supreme Court, Court of Appeal, all High Courts and 37 out of 82 Chief magistrates Courts.

Founded on the Judiciary's existing business rules and processes, requiring minimal human intervention, ECCMIS can facilitate the efficient and reliable collection, organisation, distribution, and retrieval of significant amounts of case-specific data as well as the processing of payment of relevant court fees and fines by the Citizens. Additional ECCMIS functionality includes the ability to generate reports from systems for decision-making and contribute to a more efficient and effective process of resolving cases in courts.

Key benefits expected from the rollout of ECCMIS include:

Improved Services

Case management techniques enhance record-keeping and reduce delays and case backlogs by automating and standardising manual procedures.

Fight Corruption

ECCMIS will reduce human-to-human interaction and thereby making it unattractive to engage in corrupt tendencies.

Cost Savings

Automated workflow processes guide users through their daily activities and notify users of pending actions, improving overall efficiency and cost savings.

Decision Support

Features such as the automated allocation of cases, publication of analytical performance reports and detailed case audit trails enable users to make informed decisions about procedures and facilitate better allocation of resources.

Cost Savings

Data moves seamlessly across JLOS institutions, from law enforcement to the courts, to corrections, improving communication and reducing the likelihood of processing errors.

Source: Judiciary

Video Conferencing in Courts

Video conferencing facility at the court of appeal.

The Judiciary Video Conferencing (VC) service currently installed in various courts across the country, allows for testimony and hearings to be carried out at a distance, without having to transfer prisoners and detainees to court. VC enables any person who has an interest in court proceedings to be involved in a hearing from a remote location. In its simplest form, a witness at a remote location may give his or her evidence via a video link to the court with audio-visual aids in the courtroom and the remote location.

In a typical VC setting, the Audio-Visual Link is made up of two (2) sites i.e., the Court connecting to a remote site (Prison or Remand Home) where the accused are kept. The Prosecution (ODPP) and the defence counsel usually appear physically in the Courtroom.

Video Conferencing has been identified as partial solution to case backlog as it addresses factors that cause backlog by minimising procedural delays, increasing cost efficiency for court users and mitigating challenges posed by geographical inaccessibility to courts, while simultaneously strengthening systemic transparency and accountability.

> **Video Conferencing in Courts contributes to increased access to an effective and efficient administration of the justice system and increases public trust in justice institutions**

Generally, the following benefits have been associated with the rollout of VC services: Security for both inmates and witnesses; efficient access to justice services; efficient improvement in the work process; and reduction in crowding and noise pollution at court premises with Court hearings now managed online.

It is critical to note that the use of Video Conferencing technology in Uganda's court operations is enabled by a legal and regulatory framework to streamline operations and align online court hearings to service standards and the law.

This framework includes Laws (The Constitution of the Republic of Uganda, 1995 (as amended); The Data Protection and Privacy Act, 2019; The Computer Misuse Act, 2011, The Electronic Transactions Act, 2011, The Electronic Signatures Act, 2011); Court Rules and Directions (The Judicature (Visual – Audio Link) Rules, 2016 (S.I. 26 of 2016); The Constitution (Integration of ICT into Adjudication Process, for Courts of Judicature) (Practice) Directions, 2019 (Legal Notice No. 6 of 2019); and Guidelines for On-Line Hearings in the Judiciary of Uganda (Office Instrument No. 2 of 2020). JLOS

***Source:** Judiciary*

Interview with Justice Geoffrey Kiryabwire on the Judiciary's Digital Transformation Journey

Hon. Justice Geoffrey Kiryabwire

Hon. Justice Geoffrey Kiryabwire *is a Justice of the Court of Appeal and Constitutional Court and is the Chairperson of the Judiciary's ICT Committee.* ***Edgar Kuhimbisa*** *– Advisor, E-Governance at the JLOS Secretariat caught up with the learned Justice at his chambers in Kampala for a wide-ranging interview on the Judiciary's digital agenda, the ECCMIS project, the future of Courts in the age of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and much more.*

The Judiciary has come a long way in its digital transformation journey. Describe this journey and how it has evolved over the years.

It's important to note that the integration of ICTs in the Judiciary has evolved over the years with the changing nature of needs in the judicial environment - from the use of typewriters in writing court judgements in the 1960s, to photocopiers (and stencils) in the 1980s to computing devices that we have today.

The question of oversight in the courts was manually managed with the rudimentary transmission of information on court performance from upcountry stations to headquarters via courier.

> **One of the biggest achievements of the ECCMIS project is increased efficiency and effectiveness in case management with online processing of cases and other court matters.**

This led to the development of an ICT Policy in 2008 that examined and identified areas where ICTs would be leveraged in court processes. This was an important milestone that set the stage for digital transformation in the Judiciary for the next fifteen (15) years leading to the incremental development and rollout of audio-visual infrastructure, and the Court Case Management System (CCAS) that eventually evolved into the Electronic Court Case Management System (ECCMIS) currently being rolled out in courts today.

With the launch of ECCMIS a few years ago, what would you say are the key achievements that have been registered so far?

The Judiciary has fast-tracked the implementation of ECCMIS since its launch in 2020 with the system now fully operational in about ten (10) of the busiest courts in the Country. This is a pilot phase that enables the Judiciary to learn lessons and improve the rollout process of the system.

One of the biggest achievements of the ECCMIS project is increased efficiency and effectiveness in case management with online processing of cases and other court matters.

NTR (non-tax revenue) collections from ECCMIS have shot through the roof by over 600% since the rollout of the e-payment mechanisms. This has created unprecedented increased revenue streams for the Government from the Judiciary.

> **The Judiciary has a grand strategy to ensure every court is connected to ECCMIS and benefits from digitised court processes.**

How did you manage aspects of change and adoption with the rollout of ECCMIS?

We had anticipated pushback and challenges of adoption, so we activated the implementation of our change management strategy that was already in place. Our focus was on younger users, especially in law firms who are more open to using technology. For Judicial staff, there was broad consensus to adopt the new electronic environment for case management with top leadership leading by example.

In the long run, we will encourage the setup of digital kiosks at court stations for those who may not have access to computing equipment and the Internet to facilitate e-filing and other electronic court processes running on the ECCMIS.

What is the Judiciary's strategy to ensure the ECCMIS is operational in all courts across the country?

ECCMIS will go hand in hand with infrastructural enablers such as connectivity and power at courts across the country. Interestingly, the Judiciary is not totally in control of all these enablers but is working with all the relevant Government agencies such as NITA-U to ensure this infrastructure is in place as part of the ECCMIS rollout strategy.

We have also implemented the project incrementally in phases to enable a steady rollout across the country. This may take some time, but the Judiciary has a grand strategy to ensure every court is connected to ECCMIS and benefits from digitised court processes.

What lessons can other JLOS institutions learn from the Judiciary in the implementation of their digital strategies?

We are now in the 4th industrial revolution with digital transformation becoming the norm across all walks of life. Government institutions need to be alive to this new reality and use it as motivation to digitise their service delivery business processes.

Digital agendas should be aligned with the overall institutional mandates and demonstrate value addition at all levels.

Aspects of human rights should be considered by designing systems that are people-centered and which do not contravene the fundamental tenets of justice, the right to be heard, fairness and integrity.

Leadership is a core and critical success factor for any reform agenda. What role has leadership played in digitally transforming the Judiciary over the last 20 years?

The Judiciary's digital transformation journey has been successful owing to the visionary leadership of the current and former Chief Justices with support from H.E. The President of the Republic of Uganda.

Collectively through their visionary leadership, we have been able to implement the ECCMIS project exclusively funded by Government resources without the need for external donations from development partners.

As a leading visionary of digital transformation in the Judiciary, in your opinion what does the future look like for courts in the era of artificial intelligence and pervasive computing?

In the age of robot lawyers, robot judges, online dispute resolution (ODR) platforms and chatbots all utilising a level of artificial intelligence, the judicial landscape is no doubt going to be revolutionised.

For Africa, the adoption of AI may not be as fast as it is in Europe and the USA where there is abundant availability of cheap and fast Internet - a key prerequisite for AI tools to be fully operationalised.

That said, I see a future where AI has the potential to impact almost every aspect of judicial practice, particularly with the rise of 'ChatGPT' which could be used in analysing cases and documenting court submissions.

> **The Judiciary in partnership with LexusNexus is in the process of developing an AI-powered digital judgment writing tool.**

Any new digital initiatives that the public should expect from the Judiciary soon?

The Judiciary in partnership with LexisNexus is in the process of developing an AI-powered digital judgment writing tool designed to fast-track the process of writing court judgements. The prototype for this tool should be ready for trials by the end of 2024. JLOS

Prisoner Management Information System: Powering Digital Transformation in the Uganda Prisons Service

By Peace Christine Babirye

ACP Peace Christine Babirye

The development of the Prisoners Management Information System (PMIS) started in FY2018/2019 and was completed in FY2022/2023. The system was deployed in the pilot stations namely the Luzira Maximum Upper Prison, Murchison Bay Prison and Luzira Women Prison. The biometrics data is captured for all prisoners in the pilot stations; this includes all their 10 fingerprints plus their rolled fingerprints, their palm prints, and their mug shots (Left View, Right View, and front view). This makes a total of 26 biometric records captured from every prisoner.

The biometrics records are captured to help the prisoners verify their transactions while in custody. The biometrics records also help the administration and management of prisoners in tracking recidivism and reducing re-offending rates.

The Prisoners Management Information System is centrally managed from the Prisons Headquarters.

The Prisoners Management Information System (PMIS) is the major backbone of the digitisation of Uganda's Prisons Service. This system automates all the business processes involved in the management of the prisoners from the time when they are admitted into the prison, through their rehabilitation programmes while in prison and the re-integration programmes that prepare them for life after prison. The main purpose of the PMIS is to cover all aspects and levels of administration and management of prisoners while under the safe secure custody of the Uganda Prisons Service.

> **“This system automates all the business processes involved in the management of the prisoners from the time when they are admitted into the prison, through their rehabilitation programmes while in prison and the re-integration programmes that prepare them for life after prison.”**

Biometrics Training Session at Luzira Women's Prison

The system has several modules that cover the various functions and activities involved in the rehabilitation of the offenders among which are the following:

- The admission module handles all the activities involved in the admission of prisoners on their arrival into prison.
- The Bio-Metrics Module helps to easily track the prisoner's profile, authenticate the various transactions by the prisoner while in prison, provide the prisoner's history under safe custody and track recidivism. This is one of the modules that will be integrated with Police, NIRA, Immigration, and other Government agencies for authenticity and tracking of some biometric data.
- The Medical module tracks and updates the medical condition of prisoners from the time they are admitted into prison until the time they are discharged from prison. All medical reports and medical recommendations are generated from the medical module. The confidentiality principle of the patient is emphasised in the medical module by enforcement of access control measures on the medical data of the prisoners.
- The Court attendance module performs all the functions of court attendance for all prisoners. All court schedules and court discharges are performed in this module. This will be one of the modules that will be integrated with the Judiciary's Electronic Court Case Management Information System (ECCMIS) and the Prosecution Case Management System (PROCAMIS) at the ODPP.
- The Prisoners' Property Management module involves the management of both physical property and prisoners' cash. The incoming and outgoing property of the prisoner is recorded by the PMIS, and every transaction is authenticated by the thumbprint of the prisoner already captured in the biometrics module.
- The Classification of prisoners and progressive stage system module classifies all the prisoners and aligns them to their stages. This classification system helps with identifying the best rehabilitation and reintegration programmes for the inmates. The classification and stage system also helps align the inmates with the education programmes that best benefit them while under custody to make them better citizens at the time of their exit from prison.
- The Transfers module performs all the functions and guidelines of transferring inmates from one prison to another. The transfers can be within the district and managed by the District Commanders, or within the regions and managed by the Regional Commanders or Inter-regional and this level of transfers is managed by the Prisons Headquarters. The transfer of prisoners is part of the rehabilitation and re-integration process that prisoners experience while under safe custody.

Biometrics Training Session at Luzira Women's Prison

- The Sentence Administration and Management module involves calculation of remission and other parameters involved in sentencing so that the prisoner is released on their right date of release.

- The Earning scheme and gratuity module involves the calculation of the earnings the prisoners make from their working parties as per the standard earning scheme rates. This module contributes to the rehabilitation and re-integration of the offenders by calculating their earnings and saving for them the portion of their earnings that they withdraw on their final release date.

- The Prison Station Management module involves all the staff deployments, shifts, occurrences, and incidents in the stations. This module was integrated with the Human Resource Management Information System of Uganda Prisons Service to help deploy the active staff accordingly as per the PMIS needs.

- The Gate management module manages all the gate duties of the prison stations. All gate passes that permit the prisoners to leave the prison for either court attendance medical services or outside working parties are generated and authenticated by the Gatekeeper through the Gate Management Module.

- The prisoner disciplinary records management module facilitates the disciplinary procedures for all the indisciplined inmates. The corresponding punishments for every offence are detailed in this module as guided by the Prisons Standing Orders. This module contributes to the rehabilitation of prisoners so that they are made better citizens.

- The Discharge and exit management module encompasses all modes of discharge and exit by the prisoners from the station such as normal releases, discharges from court, escapes, death, and executions.

- The Rehabilitation and Re-integration modules cover all the rehabilitation and re-integration programmes for the prisoners in the stations. This involves the activities of the semi-skilled and skilled inmates. It also covers the prisoner's education programmes from primary level, secondary level, and university level as per the Government education standards.

- System Management Administration module is for the system administrator's guidance in the management of the whole system.

- The Reports module contains all the reports generated by the Prisoners' Management Information System that help with the efficient and effective decision-making process by the Administration.

Uganda Prisons Service has now embarked on enhancement and scaling up of the Prisoners' Management Information System to cover more stations country-wide. Attainment of the full digitisation process of prisoners' administration country-wide will benefit the Uganda Prisons Service and ease integration with other JLOS institutions. This will in the long run benefit the Ugandan Government by reducing recidivism and re-offending rates. JLOS

The author is the Assistant Commissioner of Prisons and Head of ICT, Uganda Prisons Service

Navigating the Digital Frontier: URSB's Transformation Journey

Mr. Arthur Kwesiga (extreme right) at the Marriage Registration Conference hosted by the Uganda Registration Services Bureau in Kampala.

By Arthur Kwesiga

Traditionally, registration services were largely manual and time-consuming until 2012, when URSB embarked on a transformational journey that revolutionised its service offerings, transcending the conventional barriers to efficient Government operations. By embracing digital technologies, URSB has significantly reduced service delivery times, increased non-tax revenue collection, and improved customer satisfaction, setting a noticeable precedent for digital governance in Uganda. This transformation story begins with a vision to leverage technology to simplify registration services, thereby fostering economic growth and development.

The Uganda Registration Services Bureau (URSB) is a Government agency tasked with overseeing a broad spectrum of public services, including business and company registration, granting and registration of intellectual property rights, marriage registration, and the management of insolvency matters. This diverse portfolio underscores URSB's critical role in facilitating legal and formal recognition of various entities and personal statuses within Uganda, thereby contributing to the country's legal and economic infrastructure.

Before this transformation, URSB had grappled with significant operational hurdles, marred by manual, paper-based processes that were not only time-consuming and inefficient but also provided fertile ground for both real and perceived corruption. These inefficiencies, compounded by the lack of transparency and accountability inherent in physical paperwork management, often led to unnecessary delays and fostered an environment where corruption could thrive, further undermining the integrity and reliability of the registration processes as well as the accuracy of registration information.

At the time, the registration services required physical presence leading to long queues and extended service delivery times. This not only hampered the ease of doing business but also affected the progress of the overall economic environment by slowing down transactions and discouraging potential entrepreneurs. The need for change became increasingly evident as these outdated methods no longer met the demands of a growing, and dynamic economy seeking to enhance its competitiveness on the global stage.

In envisioning its digital transformation, URSB adopted the mantra and strategy of "All Digital, All Online," underpinning its ambitious goal to revolutionise service delivery. This strategic vision is aimed at transforming URSB into an exemplary modern organisation that demonstrates excellence in public service by delivering all its services online and championing

public service reforms. By aspiring to become a "Centre of Modern Registries," URSB aimed to consolidate related registry systems, ensuring the provision of consistently superior services to customers. The strategy focused on achieving a comprehensive digital transition by 2020, marking URSB's commitment to leveraging digital technologies for streamlined, efficient, and transparent service delivery.

By embracing digital technologies, URSB has significantly reduced service delivery times, increased non-tax revenue collection, and improved customer satisfaction, setting a noticeable precedent for digital governance in Uganda.

One of the critical phases in the transformation journey was Business Process Re-engineering (BPR). This was a critical step involving a comprehensive analysis and redesign of existing workflows and processes. This phase aimed to eliminate redundancies, streamline operations, and integrate digital solutions to replace manual, paper-based tasks. BPR focused on rethinking how services were delivered, ensuring that processes were not just digitised but also optimised for efficiency and effectiveness. By re-engineering these processes, URSB aimed to enhance service delivery, reduce turnaround times, and improve overall customer satisfaction, laying a solid foundation for the successful implementation of its "All Digital, All Online" strategy.

To realise the digital shift, URSB implemented a strategic change management process, emphasising training, stakeholder engagement, and clear communication. These efforts aimed to cultivate a culture of innovation and ease the transition to more efficient digital services. Emphasising clear communication, the change management efforts aimed at cultivating a culture of innovation and openness to change, are critical for the successful adoption of new digital processes and technologies. Through these efforts, URSB sought to align its workforce and users with the "All Digital, All Online" vision, ensuring a smooth transition to a more efficient and transparent service delivery model.

The technology development phase at URSB was pivotal in selecting and deploying digital tools and platforms essential for its "All Digital, All Online" strategy. This stage included the creation of secure and user-friendly systems such as the Online Business Registration System (OBRS) for business registration; the Industrial Property Administration System (IPAS) and the Front Office System for comprehensive backend and frontend intellectual property registrations; the Security Interest in Movable Property Registry System (SIMPRS) for documenting security interests in movable property; and the National Marriage Registration System for marriage documentation. These public-facing registries are bolstered by administrative platforms like the Integrated Financial Management System (IFMS) for financial oversight and the Electronic Government Procurement (EGP) for procurement processes. With a focus on data security, system integration, and scalability, these systems are interconnected with the National Backbone Infrastructure of the National Information Technology Authority. They are also integrated with the Uganda Revenue Authority (URA) for non-tax revenue collection and the National Identification and Registration Authority for personal identification verification, ensuring accessibility, reliability, and efficiency in line with the objective of revolutionising public service delivery in Uganda.

To ensure the sustainability of its systems, URSB implemented a comprehensive training and capacity-building initiative, pivotal for the digital transformation's success. This initiative encompassed extensive training programmes targeting not just the technical team but all URSB staff and external stakeholders, aiming to acquaint them with the new digital systems and processes. The internal training emphasised developing digital literacy, enhancing technical skills, and nurturing an adaptable approach to technological advancements. Externally, URSB rolled out awareness campaigns and workshops, educating the public and the business sector on accessing and utilising online services. This approach was designed to ease the transition to the digital platform, ensuring all users could navigate the new systems effectively.

In envisioning its digital transformation, URSB adopted the mantra and strategy of "All Digital, All Online," underpinning its ambitious goal to revolutionise service delivery.

After the deployment of the online systems, URSB has had a profound impact on public service delivery in Uganda. This shift has dramatically reduced the time required for service processes from weeks to just days, significantly enhancing the ease of doing business. Furthermore, the move to

digital platforms has led to a substantial increase in revenue, demonstrating the economic benefits of efficient and transparent operations. Additionally, customer satisfaction has seen notable improvements, with users benefiting from the convenience and accessibility of online services. This transformation exemplifies the potential of digital innovation to streamline Government services, foster economic growth, and improve the lives of citizens.

> **A key factor contributing to the success of URSB's digital transformation is the establishment of strategic partnerships with both private and public institutions, which formed a collaborative network enhancing service delivery and operational efficiency.**

URSB's journey towards digital transformation was fraught with challenges. Confronting the hurdles inherent in such a digital shift, URSB encountered significant issues, including the digital divide, which left behind certain population segments that are not computer literate and others that do not have access to the Internet thus limiting utilisation of online services. Equally crucial was addressing digital literacy among both users and staff to ensure the effective adoption and utilisation of new technologies. Additionally, safeguarding data privacy and security in the digital realm demanded the implementation of stringent solutions. Despite these challenges, URSB's dedication to continuous improvement and active stakeholder engagement have played a crucial role in navigating these obstacles, thereby propelling its digital agenda forward.

A key factor contributing to the success of URSB's digital transformation is the establishment of strategic partnerships with both private and public institutions, which formed a collaborative network enhancing service delivery and operational efficiency. Engaging in partnerships with like-minded and prominent entities such as the Uganda Revenue Authority (URA), the Justice Law and Order Sector (JLOS), the World Bank, the National Identification and Registration Authority (NIRA), the National Information Technology Authority (NITA), the Uganda Law Society, and various financial institutions has been pivotal. These collaborations enabled efficient data sharing, streamlined processes, and broadened service access, showcasing a comprehensive approach to digital governance that taps into collective expertise and resources for the benefit of Uganda's economic and social progress.

From URSB's digital transformation journey, key lessons and best practices have emerged. Foremost is the importance of a clear vision and strategic planning, defined by the mantra of "All Digital, All Online." Engaging stakeholders at all levels and fostering a culture of change management was crucial for a smooth transition. Investing in training and capacity building ensured both staff and users adapted well to the new systems. Continuous improvement and responsiveness to feedback helped refine services. These insights underscore the value of adaptability, stakeholder engagement, and a clear vision in driving successful digital transformations.

As URSB looks to a bright future, its journey towards digital excellence continues with plans to further innovate and expand its digital services. The agency aims to harness emerging technologies such as generative artificial intelligence (AI) to enhance service delivery, improve user experience, and address the evolving needs of Uganda's dynamic economy. By consolidating gains and learning from past challenges, URSB is poised to strengthen its role as a leader in digital governance, aiming for greater inclusivity, efficiency, and impact in its service to the public.

URSB's digital transformation journey exemplifies a monumental shift towards streamlined, efficient, and inclusive public service delivery. Embracing the "All Digital, All Online" concept has not only enhanced operational effectiveness but also significantly contributed to Uganda's economic growth and development. This transformation underscores the power of digital innovation in public service, setting a benchmark for other institutions worldwide. As URSB continues to evolve and adapt to new technological advancements, its journey remains a beacon of inspiration for digital governance and service excellence. JLOS

> **The digital transformation shift has dramatically reduced the time required for service processes from weeks to just days, significantly enhancing the ease of doing business.**

The author is the Director of ICT at the Uganda Registration Services Bureau (URSB)

Security Interest in Movable Property Registry (SIMPO)

Financial institutions have often found it hard to lend money to borrowers who lack land titles and other related collaterals. It was even a challenge to consider the use of chattels and other movable properties. This challenge has been addressed by the enactment of the Security Interest in Movable Properties Act (2019) and the SIMPO registry.

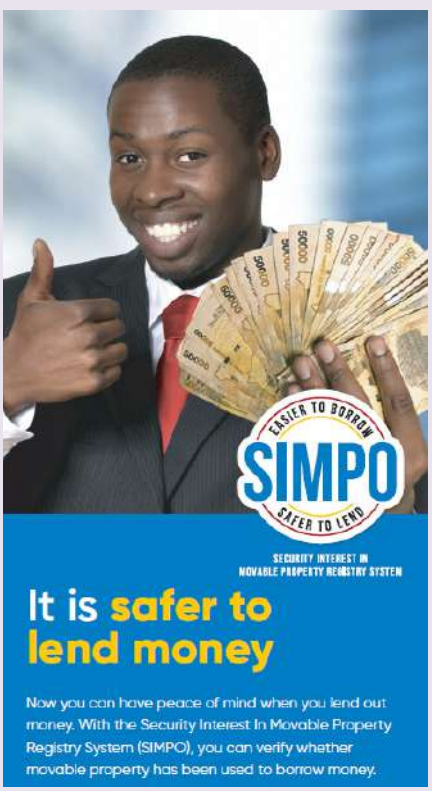
SIMPO is a fully electronic platform operated by the Uganda Registration Services Bureau (URSB) open to both secured creditors and borrowers providing information on encumbrances of movable property of borrowers. Secured creditors can access the database online. Established under the Security Interest in Movable Property Act of 2019, SIMPO contributes to breaking the barriers of access to affordable credit that have long been a hindrance to credit for low to middle-income owners.

SIMPO allows Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) as well as individuals whose major constraint to economic growth is lack of affordable credit, to use their movable assets as collateral for loans. SIMPO was developed to reduce interest rates, decrease default rates, and increase the pool of new borrowers.

The fully online registry facilitates secured creditors to register their security interests in movable assets such as livestock, crops, motor vehicles, electronics, and furniture while providing the public with notice of the existence of such security interest.

It is envisaged that access to this information will result in affordable financing from regulated financial and non-financial institutions that prefer traditional collateral like land and buildings, as searching the Registry helps creditors evaluate the risk of lending before a decision to lend is made. JLOS

Source: URSB



Business Process Automation and Systems Integration at the Directorate of Citizenship and Immigration Control

By Col. Geoffrey Kambere

Recognising the need to respond to emerging challenges, the Directorate of Citizenship, and Immigration Control (DCIC) in the Ministry of Internal Affairs embarked on a digital transformation journey in 2016.

Before 2016, Visas and Permits were issued manually which presented several challenges to border management control, including but not limited to, difficulty in balancing security and traveler identification and facilitation, limited time to profile passengers, detection of cross-boundary crimes such as human trafficking and smuggling, irregular migration, difficulty in retrieving data, laborious work in gathering statistics, and accountability for Non-Tax Revenue collections. This was way below the international standards and recommended best practices outlined by the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) which emphasises traveler identification and risk assessment be undertaken by member states at different phases of the travelers' journey (pre-departure, pre-arrival, at entry, during stay and exit).

DCIC officials at a recent capacity building seminar.

e-Visa and Permit system

The system was implemented in a phased manner, starting with visas and permits, due to limited resources. Our services are accessed on the online portal (www.visas.immigration.go .ug) where applicants apply and pay for their Visa or Permits online at anytime from anywhere in the world. They can track the status of their applications and receive timely notifications.

The system includes an internal portal for processing and approval of immigration facilities such as Visas, Work Permits, Student Passes, Special Passes, Dependent Passes, Certificates of Residence and Citizenship applications.

The E-Immigration System is integrated with the Uganda Revenue Authority (URA) e-tax system where payment for every online immigration service is tagged to a payment registration number (PRN). This has helped to

> **The e-Visa system has streamlined and digitised processes at the Immigration Department with over 2.8 million Visa and Permit applications processed since its inception in June 2016 and non-tax revenues (NTR) of UGX 197BN at inception in 2016 to 326BN as of 2023.**

curb revenue leakages associated with manual revenue collection.

Our services are available at Entebbe International Airport plus 10 other points of entry, 10 Regional Offices and 21 Embassies and Missions abroad all of which are interconnected and exchange data in real-time.

Border Management System (BMS)

Following the successful implementation and rollout of the e-Visa and Permit system, DCIC embarked on the second phase and upgraded to a full Border Management System to manage the entry and exit of Ugandans and non-visa-prone travelers. This upgrade transformed the e-visa system into a complete e-immigration system.

This upgrade included the Automated Border Control system which implemented 5 self-service kiosks and a dual skylane gate where Ugandans and foreign residents can self-clear at Entebbe International Airport without the intervention of an Immigration Officer.

> **Business Process Automation has drastically improved the turn-around time for processing and issuance of immigration facilities, thus enhancing the overall experience for applicants and stakeholders.**

Systems Integration

With support from the Justice, Law, and Order Sector (JLOS), DCIC embarked on migration and digitisation of the old manual data, and integration of the same as part of its modernisation strategy. About 2.5 million files have been digitised and ready for use in the automated systems. In addition, JLOS has supported DCIC in the decentralisation of its services through funding for workstations to enable applicants to access personalisation services at regional offices.

> **JLOS has supported DCIC in the decentralisation of its services through funding for workstations to enable applicants to access personalisation services at regional offices.**

Furthermore, the Sector has supported DCIC in strengthening enforcement and surveillance through the provision of funds to procure motor vehicles to strengthen border management and purchase mobile field verification kits to ensure compliance with immigration laws.

In addition to traveler identification and profiling, ICAO standards require member states to have their national systems integrated with interoperable applications such as Advanced Passenger Information System (APIS), Passenger Name Record (PNR) and the Interpol database for lost and stolen documents to help in risk assessment and management. This is a journey that DCIC has already embarked on.

Col. Geoffrey Brian Kambere (L) the Commissioner (Immigration Control)

This integrated approach not only enhances operational efficiency but also strengthens collaboration and information sharing among stakeholders, enabling more informed decision-making and better enforcement of immigration policies.

For example, the E-Immigration System is currently integrated with the National Social Security Fund (NSSF). This has helped in the accurate identification of foreigners at registration and verification of beneficiaries before benefits are disbursed.

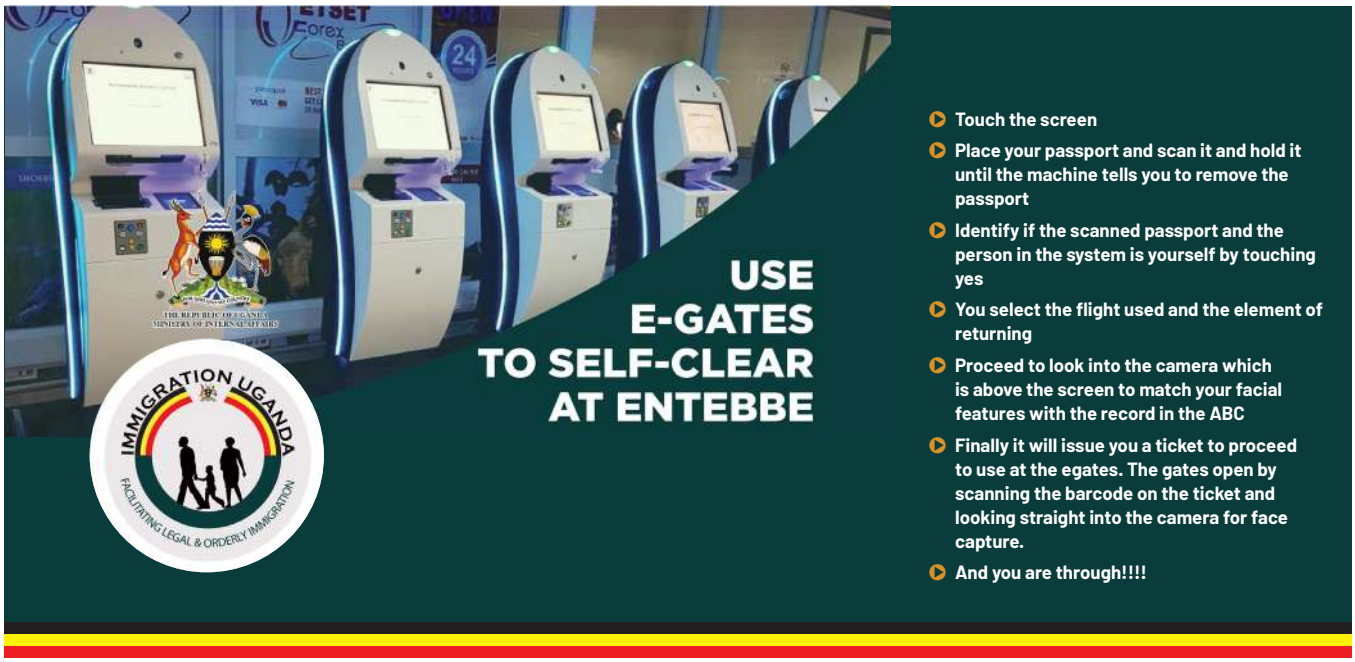
What Next?

Despite all the success of the digital transformation thus far, there is still a lot more to be done. Most of the points of entry (about 80%) still operate on a manual basis without any system and there are still several services such as issuance of temporary travel documents, immigration management of border communities, surveillance and enforcement that are yet to be digitised.

It is the goal of DCIC to continue the digital transformation journey until all its services have been fully digitised to improve national security, enhance service delivery and increase NTR collections. JLOS

The author is the Commissioner (Immigration Control) at the Directorate of Citizenship and Immigration Control (DCIC), Ministry of Internal Affairs.

E-Immigration System



In 2014, the Directorate of Citizenship and Immigration Control (DCIC) embarked on the development of an e-visa, e-Permit and Border Management System to address challenges associated with manual management of immigration services. Operational since 2016, the e-immigration system has evolved into an online visa application platform that enables foreign nationals travelling to Uganda to apply/renew/extend/review/appeal for the following services: entry visas, student passes, dependent passes, work permits, certificates of residence and Uganda citizenship to secure the right immigration status documentation for the said facilities.

The online e-Visa System is geographically spread to about 17 missions abroad including Washington DC, Pretoria, Canberra, London, Paris, Ankara, Beijing, Riyadh, Abuja, Guangzhou, Ottawa, Brussels, and Addis Ababa where visas can be personalised before boarding or the visitor may choose to only apply online and come to any of the ports of entry with a travel authorisation.

With automated functions, the e-Visa/Permit/Pass System has greatly improved the turnaround time in service delivery through provision of the following:

- Online payment and URA integration for all the payable immigration facilities.
- Online processing across all levels with options to defer in case the application is not complete.
- Online tracking of applications at all levels.
- Border management including self-service e-Gates at Entebbe International Airport to fast-track trusted passenger crossing.
- Stop list or tracking of wanted persons.
- Immigration law enforcement services.
- Visa on arrival payment and management.

Source: DCIC

Benefits of the e-Immigration system include:

- Enhancement of national Security through visibility of persons entering and exiting Uganda's borders.
- Improved Non-Tax Revenue (NTR) Collection due to automation of immigration business processes.
- Data analysis capabilities of the e-immigration system to inform decision-making
- Efficient and effective inspection/tracking of illegal immigrants through an alerts and notifications service embedded in the e-immigration platform.

E-Passport Service

In a bid to become a model of excellence in the delivery of passport, immigration, and citizenship services, the Directorate of Citizenship, and Immigration Control (DCIC) has over the years developed an ICT-enabled service delivery platform to deliver high-quality digitally driven service through business process reform, automation, and integration.

The e-Passport service launched on the 9th of November 2018 was driven by the need to migrate from the ordinary Machine-readable passport (MRPS) to the electronically supported MRPS which is a requirement for the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) member states.

The ICAO requirement provided the momentum to review passport issuance business processes and set the stage for the rollout of a fully automated passport service delivery system with its associated benefits of efficiency, effectiveness, and transparency.

Key facts about the e-Passport Service:

- Passports have been upgraded with additional visual and electronic security features to combat identity fraud.
- Provided a platform to build "smart borders" (e-Gates) supported by e-MRPs to facilitate smart border control and enhance national security.
- Provided seamless and hassle-free solutions to serve the huge demand for passports.
- Has the capability for a feedback mechanism to passport applicants through electronic notifications[1] at various stages of the passport application process.
- Integrated with other databases like the National Identification Register (NIR), and Uganda Revenue Authority's e-TAX System to facilitate accurate identification of applicants and processing of passport application fees.

E-Passport online application process:

Step 1.
Log into the passport portal www.passports.go.ug;

Step 2.
Accept the terms and conditions displayed in the **Disclaimer.**

Step 3:
Answer simple security questions.

Step 4.
Complete the passport application form.

Step 5.
Print **Passport Application Payment Advice Form**

Step 6.
Make payment for the selected type of passport using the selected payment method.

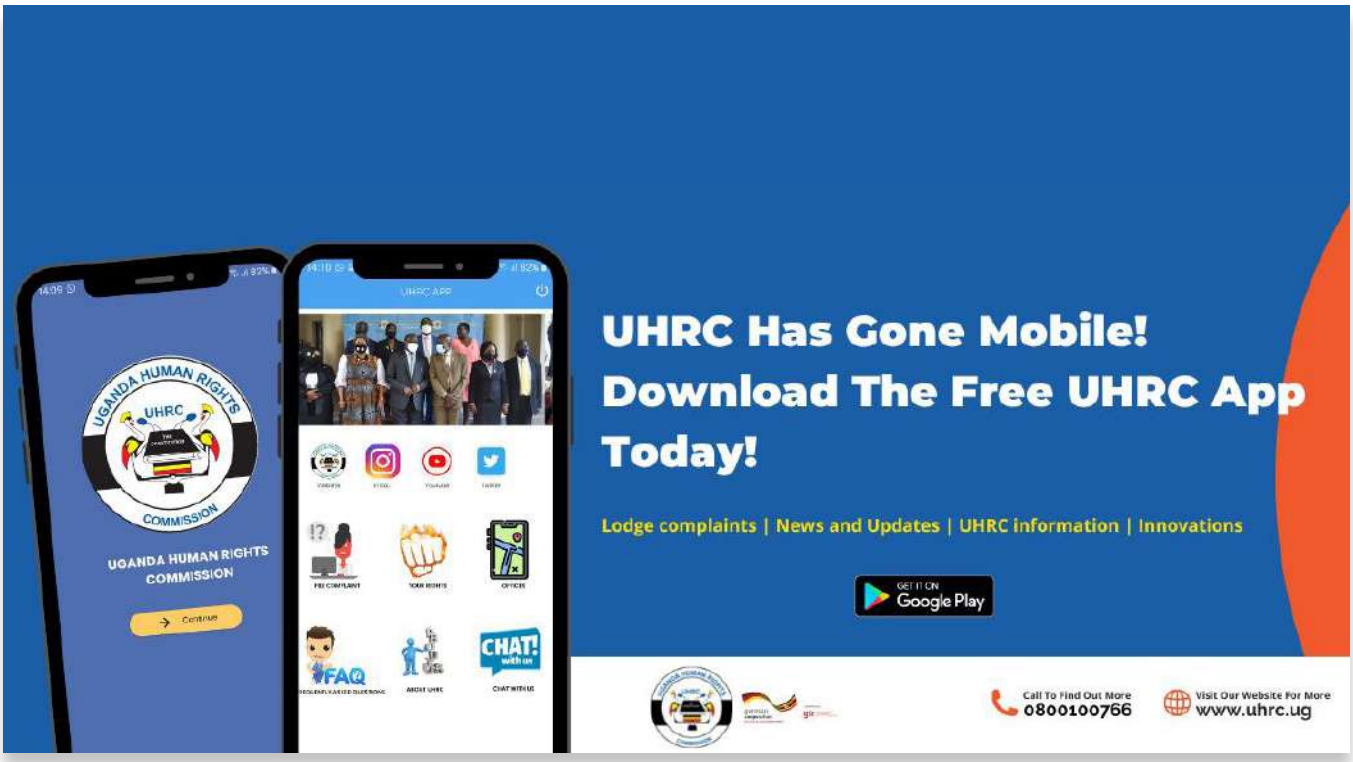
Step 7.
Schedule an appointment for a date of your convenience using the **schedule appointment** link on the home page.

Step 8.
Print **Passport Application Appointment Form**

Step 9.
Report to the selected passport Centre with the **passport appointment form** with the appropriate application requirements displayed on the website, for enrolment.

Source: DCIC

Human Rights Mobile App



The COVID-19 pandemic presented the Uganda Human Rights Commission (UHRC) with the need and opportunity for public-facing digital mobile platforms for information dissemination and complaints handling. Due to travel restrictions associated with stopping the spread of the virus, UHRC activities notably civil education programmes have been greatly hindered as a result. Digital platforms are therefore being explored by UHRC to serve as information dissemination channels in communities.

The Human Rights Mobile app has been developed and customised to provide human rights information, receive and process complaints and provide feedback to complainants during the case management process.

The app has the following main features:

- Civic Education tool. This is the main feature of the app and is used in disseminating critical human rights information and topics to the users daily. Some of the information to be disseminated is knowing your rights, duties, and responsibilities among others.
- Link to the Human Rights Integrated Information System (HURIS). This enables complainants with valid complaint numbers to track the status of their files and to aid users in lodging complaints, subject to approval by the Director of Complaints Investigations and Legal Services.
- General Information about the Uganda Human Rights Commission. The app points to the Geographical Positioning Systems (GPS) coordinates of the nearest UHRC office to the user.
- Provision of general information about the Commission

Source: UHRC

National Security Information System (NSIS): An Overview

The National Identification and Registration Authority (NIRA) was established by the Registration of Persons Act, of 2015.

The mandate of the Authority is to register citizens and aliens legally resident in Uganda for national identification and alien identification respectively as well as register births, deaths and adoption orders and issue the respective certificates.

The Registration of Persons Act, of 2015 established the National Identification and Registration Authority (NIRA) and tasked the authority to:

- Create, manage, maintain, and operate the National Identification Register
- Register citizens and non-citizens who are lawfully resident in Uganda.
- Register all births and deaths and adoption orders in the country and issue appropriate certificates.
- Assign a unique National/Alien Identification Number to every person entered in the register.
- Issue National/Alien identification cards and alien identification cards.
- Harmonize and incorporate into the register where necessary, information from other databases in Government agencies relating to the registration of persons.
- Verify and authenticate information relating to the registration and identification of persons.
- Collate information obtained under this Act and reproduce it as may be required from time to time.
- Ensure the preservation, protection and security of any information or data collected, obtained, maintained, or stored in the register.

Ms. Rosemary Kisembo, Executive Director – National Identification and Registration Authority (NIRA).

- Promote the use of national identification cards to advance the economic, political and social activities in the country.
- Research on the developments in the identity management sector

NIRA operates a National Security Information System (NSIS) that provides a biometric National Identification Register to strengthen citizen identity management, and national security and for the social and economic development of the country. The core functionality of the NSIS includes identification; registration; processing and producing identity cards for eligible Ugandans; management of a comprehensive National Identification Register; and detection and prevention of illegal registration through citizen verification.

Through the NSIS, NIRA can: identify, register and issue national identification numbers (NINs) to Ugandan citizens; issue National Identity cards to all Citizens of Uganda aged 18 years and above; identify and issue cards to foreign residents and issue secure identification cards that enable Ugandans engage in economic and social-political activities; and create a platform for integration with other databases of other agencies for ease of data sharing and effective service delivery. Currently the NSIS through its national identification register can integrate with the e-passport service at the Directorate of Citizenship and Immigration Control (Ministry of Internal Affairs) to ease the process of identification via the National Identification Number (NIN). JLOS

Source: NIRA

Exploring the connection between family justice and technology

By Barbara Kitui

In Uganda, it is estimated that by January 2023 a total of 11.77 million people had used the Internet. However, Internet penetration remained poor and stood at 24.6%. Notably, by January 2023, Uganda accounted for a total of 2.05 million social media users, and 30.55 million mobile phone connections representing 63.8% of the Uganda population (Datareportal Digital 2023: Uganda).

According to the Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development (MoFPED), though Uganda has made efforts to provide an enabling environment for deepening technology uptake, *'poor and inadequate ICT infrastructure and low levels of Internet penetration'* persist.

There is limited data and statistics to indicate the holistic uptake of technology in family justice processes. Nonetheless, the above statistics reveal that reliance on technology in family justice is timely (and a real possibility) with the ongoing digital transformation. Given the high number of technology users as illustrated above, a robust family law-tech system is arguably integral to progressive and transformative family justice systems in Uganda.

Family justice relates to a justice system that enables families to handle family-related disputes and processes quickly. Expeditious justice may be achieved through family justice reform processes aimed at strengthening systems. Family justice focuses on addressing family law issues including child maintenance, child custody, adoption, parenting orders, succession, marriage, separation and divorce, estate planning and management including cross-border estate planning management.

Barbara Kitui, Resource Person (Family Justice) at the JLOS Secretariat

Technology refers to methods, systems, and devices which are the result of scientific knowledge being used

for practical purposes' (Collins English Dictionary). While family justice and technology may seem distantly related, family justice relies on technology as an enabler to strengthen access to justice for communities. For example, technology can be a game-changer through online Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) processes which provide a safe virtual space for parties as they dialogue.

While family justice and technology may seem distantly related, family justice relies on technology as an enabler to strengthen access to justice for communities.

Progressive family justice should be technology-driven especially in this digitally disruptive era. Currently, the Government of Uganda is at various stages of e-governance within the various Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs). Some MDAs are in the early stages of business process automation; others are semi-automated while others are fully automated and have transitioned to exchanging data and information across multiple institutions.

Digital mechanisms through which family justice can be technology-driven may include online alternative dispute resolution mechanisms for the resolution of family disputes and this may mitigate the face-to-face tensions and salvage family ties; online family court hearings which may also help to ease the tension occasioned by physical court appearances; assistive self-representation in less technical family law cases; simplified online forms to initiate processes for identification when processing letters of administration or probate; assistive technology to support the populace in will writing and estate planning. Also, consider for example, a software developer could create an application for smartphones for which users could report family injustices, whereby the app is integrated with the different agencies involved in enforcing family justice for quick action.

For family justice-technology interventions to be fulfilled, some considerations should be made:

- Understand the digital service uptake of all justice services. This can be done through a quantitative and qualitative study at all service delivery points so that information is made available for decision-making to guide on the best mode of e-justice interventions and homegrown solutions.
- Employ a hybrid technology transformative approach to family justice. It is important to note that not everyone can access the Internet. In a bid to leave no one behind, a hybrid model should be implemented. Technology services should be greatly simplified and made available for anyone to use.
- Simplify family justice technology interventions to ensure digital palatability by the end user regardless of age, gender, level of education or literacy.
- Use legal aid service providers as enablers to increase digital usage. Since most clients may not be able to file their documents online or manoeuvre the e-justice system, they may need the legal aid services of lawyers. These lawyers need to be affordable for all persons.
- High regard for ethical considerations while harnessing technology including data privacy and protection. This can be ensured through the human rights-based approach which promotes the respect of rights including the right to dignity in the utilisation of technology for the advancement of family justice.

To achieve the highest level of reform in Uganda's family justice system, technology is a timely enabler. E-justice technology designed to facilitate family justice should be harnessed effectively with reliance on key considerations including data uptake analysis, accessible and usable digital platforms, legal aid service providers as enablers and the adoption of the human rights-based approach to digital transformation.

To achieve the highest level of reform in Uganda's family justice system, technology is a timely enabler.

Technology is the future. Government should continue harnessing technology for national growth, development, prosperity, and robust family justice systems. JLOS

The author is the Family Justice Resource Person at the Governance and Security Programme (JLOS) Secretariat, Ministry of Justice, and Constitutional Affairs

Driving Legal Innovation: Introducing the Justice Innovators Community

By Patricia Aima Okou

Justice innovation stakeholders at the 2023 Legal Tech Expo held at the Innovation Village in Kampala.

In Uganda's legal landscape, a transformative force is at work, poised to revolutionise traditional practices and drive sustainable change. The Justice Innovators Community (JIC), an e-Justice Association, stands at the forefront of this movement, driving forward the agenda of digital transformation and enhancing access to justice.

JIC is more than an association; it is a dynamic ecosystem that unites legal professionals, technologists, academia, Government bodies, and investors under a common vision. Together, these stakeholders collaborate to drive innovation, foster growth, and create impactful solutions within Uganda's legal industry.

Recognising the fragmented nature of innovation within the legal domain, JIC takes a proactive stance in fostering collaboration, partnerships, and synergies among stakeholders. By dismantling silos and fostering a culture of collective innovation, JIC endeavours to unlock the transformative potential of Legal Tech and Justice Tech solutions, thus revolutionising both operational efficiency and societal impact.

Central to JIC's mandate is the acknowledgement of technology as a potent catalyst for reshaping legal practice and enhancing access to justice. Through initiatives such as automated self-help, AI-driven service delivery, and data-driven solutions, JIC seeks to streamline legal processes while advancing the interests of both legal practitioners and the wider public.

Crucially, JIC rejects the notion of technology as a threat to the legal profession, instead embracing it as an opportunity for augmentation. By equipping legal professionals with skills such as data analytics, design thinking, and technological proficiency,

JIC empowers them to adapt and thrive in an increasingly digital environment.

Moreover, JIC remains steadfast in its commitment to fostering enriched customer experiences, or "justice journeys," through the strategic deployment of technology in access to justice service delivery. By enhancing the efficiency and efficacy of legal processes, JIC endeavours to bolster public confidence and trust in the justice system, thereby promoting social cohesion and equitable outcomes.

The community's activities span a spectrum of proactive engagements, ranging from the dissemination of monthly newsletters and hosting legal tech expos to organising hackathons, conferences, fireside chats, and mentorship programmes for emerging legal innovators. Through these multifaceted initiatives, JIC aims not only to promote the digital transformation of the legal industry but also to drive investment, enhance access to justice, cultivate online legal marketplaces, and fortify the capacity of legal professionals and institutions.

> **The Justice Innovators Community harbours an audacious vision of extending its impact beyond the borders of Uganda, positioning itself as the preeminent hub for justice innovation solutions across the African continent.**

Looking ahead, the Justice Innovators Community harbours an audacious vision of extending its impact beyond the borders of Uganda, positioning itself as the preeminent hub for justice innovation solutions across the African continent. By spearheading the establishment of a digitally transformed, efficient, competitive, and inclusive legal sector, JIC aspires to catalyse holistic growth and development throughout Africa.

In summary, the Justice Innovators Community emerges as a beacon of proactive leadership, spearheading the charge towards digital innovation in Uganda's legal sphere and beyond. By harnessing the transformative power of technology and fostering collaborative synergy among stakeholders, JIC heralds a future where access to justice is not just a privilege but a fundamental human right accessible to all. JLOS

The author is a Legal Associate (LegalTech Lab / The Innovation Village) and Community Manager at the Justice Innovators Community (JIC)

SEMA technical team with Uganda Police Officers

Measuring Customer Satisfaction in the Justice Sector Using Technology

By Joan Nsasiirwe Success

SEMA is a data-driven non-profit enterprise committed to improving service delivery across Uganda's public and private sectors. SEMA's real-time feedback systems empower diverse institutions, including police stations, courts, NIRA, DCIC, and municipalities, to gather actionable insights directly from citizens. Committed to transparency, SEMA rigorously analyses this data to drive evidence-based decision-making and continuous improvement.

> **SEMA embodies the e-justice principle of using citizen feedback as a catalyst for transformative change within the justice system.**

SEMA embodies the e-justice principle of using citizen feedback as a catalyst for transformative change within the justice system.

In a significant step towards transparency and accountability, a partnership between SEMA and JLOS transformed citizen interaction with Uganda's vital public offices. SEMA and JLOS (Justice, Law, and Order Sector) partnership began in 2018 with a pilot project that placed feedback mechanisms in Kampala Divisional Police Stations. Due to its success, this initiative

expanded in 2021 to 40 JLOS service points across the country, including the Magistrates Courts, Police stations, Uganda Registration Services Bureau (URSB) offices, National Identification and Registration Authority (NIRA) offices, and Directorate of Citizenship and Immigration Control (DCIC) offices.

The primary aim of the collaboration was to:

- Measure public satisfaction with JLOS services in different regions and at 5 different JLOS offices, independently and over time.
- Enhance JLOS Monitoring and Evaluation systems to drive performance improvement.
- Utilize citizen feedback to identify potential areas of improvement within JLOS offices.

Why Customer Satisfaction Matters in the Justice Sector

Accountability Reimagined

E-justice transforms feedback into an accountability tool. Data points hold institutions responsible, while real-time monitoring drives rapid self-correction.

Trust by Design

E-justice offers accessible, user-friendly platforms for feedback, fostering openness and building trust – especially for marginalised communities.

Data as a Roadmap to Improvement

E-justice analyses feedback for deep insights, pinpointing recurring issues and service bottlenecks. This drives targeted, data-informed improvements.

Justice, Open-Source Style

Transparency means making changes visible. Digital data dashboards display feedback-driven successes, giving citizens real-time proof that their input matters.

Programme Approach

SEMA employed a multi-pronged approach to gather comprehensive real-time feedback from a diverse pool of citizens.

The Problem

Like any complex service, the justice system requires clear communication channels to function effectively. 90% of Ugandans experienced one or more need(s) that were serious and difficult to resolve with the major barriers being poor knowledge of rights and laws, and personal & institutional lack of financial resources among others (HiiL, 2016). Currently, many citizens also need a direct way to rate their experiences and provide feedback. Without dedicated platforms for evaluation, citizens find their voices marginalised, hindering their ability to shape the services they rely on. Consequently, institutions need the actionable insights to make meaningful, data-driven improvements. This barrier not only inhibits individual cases but undermines the potential for a more responsive and equitable justice system overall.

Digital Channels

USSD codes, QR codes, online surveys, and data collection devices for easy access and immediate input.

In-Person Interaction

Skilled personnel conducted interviews, ensuring the inclusion of less tech-savvy individuals and potentially richer qualitative data.

A Police officer being shown SEMA data reports at a Police Station in Kampala. On the right, a SEMA feedback device deployed outside a courtroom.

The programme reached over **53,000** citizens across various JLOS locations with an average satisfaction rate of 68.3%, highlighting a surprising finding: longer wait times did not always correspond with lower satisfaction, emphasising the multifaceted nature of customer experience.

The programme pinpointed a range of interventions including customer care skills training for police officers to streamlined, user-friendly digital processes within URSB, ensuring both a human touch and technology-driven efficiency. Integrating online and in-person systems with clear information flows is vital for institutions like NIRA and DCIC to provide reliable services.

To track progress, institutions are encouraged to adopt data-driven performance standards directly tied to citizen feedback metrics. The ongoing evaluation empowers agencies to embrace a culture of constant, informed improvement. SEMA's work goes beyond traditional feedback systems.

SEMA staff exhibiting how the service feedback mechanisms work.

By utilising a robust digital toolkit, we fuel advancements in the broader e-justice movement. Data-driven improvement cycles, increased focus on user experience, and a commitment to transparency strengthened trust in critical Government institutions.

In conclusion, this programme demonstrated the significant potential of digital tools and e-justice principles to improve service quality and citizen trust within Uganda's justice system. While early signs show positive progress, sustained efforts leveraging digital technologies are required to ensure lasting improvements. The commitment of dedicated partners such as JLOS to continuous innovation and collaboration is crucial to achieving accountable and transparent institutions that deliver high-quality services while actively involving citizens in the improvement process through technology-driven solutions.

This work would not have been possible without the support of our dedicated Sector partners, your contributions fuel our mission to improve service delivery using client feedback. JLOS

The author is the Country Director, of SEMA Uganda.

Barefoot Law

Barefoot Law is a nonprofit organisation which through the innovative use of digital technology, empowers people with free legal information so that they can use it to develop legal solutions for their justice needs.

Barefoot Law envisions real and virtual worlds in which every person – natural, legal, or electronic – readily has access to justice and the law, to empower themselves and their communities to thrive.

> **We provide easy and quality legal information and guidance for you to get justice.**

For more than 1.5 billion people worldwide, there is no remedy for the injustice they face. A significant part of the problem which serves as a barrier to people accessing justice is that people are located far away from justice convergence points in a myriad of ways - physically, culturally, psychosocially, and socio-economically.

We envision real and virtual worlds in which every person – natural, legal, or electronic – readily has access to justice and the law, to empower themselves and their communities to thrive. To overcome the gross disservice to the world, the law and justice must be made readily available for all, that is what Barefoot Law seeks to do.

Source: *Barefoot Law*

Yunga

Create Neighborhood Safety with Yunga's community-powered digital security network.

> **We take community safety to the next level by ensuring a rapid and effective response in the event of a break-in or any suspicious activity detected by the Yunga system**

Yunga's vision is to leverage the power of community trust, sharing, and technology to improve community security in Sub-Saharan Africa by investing in the manufacturing of quick user-friendly response crime prevention security tools locally backed by microinsurance.

Source: *Yunga Technologies*

Evidence and Methods Lab

Founded in 2017, Evidence and Methods Lab (EML) is a technology-driven initiative that strives to make information more accessible and foster accountability in Africa's public sector. EML collaborates with esteemed partners such as the United States Embassy in Kampala, The Hague Institute for Innovation of Law (HiiL), and Voice to simplify complex data and information for public empowerment.

The organisation values simplicity, creativity, and discipline, which helps empower the public by providing precise and easy-to understand information. EML works closely with funders and clients such as the partners mentioned above to expand its reach and ensure its sustainability plan, thereby continuing its impactful work in informing policymaking and enhancing public discourse and service delivery throughout the continent.

EML aims to promote social justice through informed policy-making and public discourse. Every initiative contributes to creating equitable and accountable societies, ensuring that EML promotes and reinforces these values.

EML is a civic technology initiative working in the areas of access to information, accountability and collating what works in generating evidence.

Mission

To adopt technology to innovatively share information in simplified formats

Vision

To be the leading data visualisation civic tech initiative in Africa

Values:

Creativity; Simplicity; and Discipline

Source: Evidence and Methods Lab

EVIDENCE AND METHODS LAB
simplify visualise share measure

An Outsider's Perspective on E-Governance and E-Justice

By Timothy Kakuru

Timothy Kakuru, Director Programmes and Impact at Barefoot Law.

Having worked for over a decade within the innovation and justice space, with multiple organisations half of which I co-founded, I have had a chance to experience firsthand how technology has changed the way services are provided; the way we interact with each other; and generally, the impact of digital transformation on our day to day lives. We have leapt into a technology-driven era practically instantly. For better or worse, the world is more connected than ever, and e-governance is a permanent part of how societies will be managed going forward.

Although electronic (E-) Governance is a relatively new concept globally, most people are bound to have an idea about it because of how ubiquitous technology has become in everyday life. People use it for work (computers), travel (cars), entertainment (TVs and radios), communication (telephones), and monetary transactions (mobile money) and a growing number of young people are using technology to create work opportunities in high unemployment environments.

> **"e-governance needs to be embedded in the Government processes and supported politically and technically by the Government as well as accepted and utilised by society."**

After graduating from the University and the Law Development Centre, the concept of employability and productivity was quickly evolving. We used the Uganda Legal Information Institute (ULII) website as a free online law library. Some friends created blogs where they uploaded their coursework and case law summaries. Others who studied business courses, experimented with starting online magazines. Facebook merchandise pages thrived almost instantly.

On the flip side, because humanity always seems to need to balance the good with a little evil, we saw new social transgressions like revenge porn emerge. Fraudsters use mobile money to hoodwink unsuspecting victims while outright falsehoods (fake news) are being published on social media to alarm or mislead the public.

It has therefore always been clear that the advent of this technology-driven society would require an equally technologically influenced mode of governance as well as a few more rules to consider previously unimaginable legal conundrums.

E-Governance refers to the broad mechanism governments may use to administer and govern society with the help of technology. It covers three broad areas: e-administration, e-society, and e-services. For it to be effective, it is expected that e-governance needs to be embedded in the Government processes and supported politically and technically by the Government as well as accepted and utilised by society.

Uganda's Government embarked on an e-governance system with the little-known DistrictNet programme in 2002 to provide transparency at the local Government levels and improve the provision of public information using ICTs. This was an ambitious early start that proved prescient especially when the COVID-19 pandemic occurred in 2020, and it was perhaps the biggest catalyst for the huge leap into e-governance we see today. A large proportion of everyday Government services can be found online from registering a company through URSB's online portal; to reporting a crime through UPF Mobi – an app introduced by the Uganda Police Force; to having the commercial court, and other courts increasingly moving to digital registration and scheduling through the Electronic Court Case Management System (ECCMIS).

As a lawyer, my observations of the growing e-governance phenomenon tend to skew more to the justice system. Generally, it seems that the justice sector in comparison to the Health Sector is often associated with slow adoption of new technologies. This could be due to the heavy reliance of the legal and health professions on tradition, legislation, and public sentiment. In any case, the justice system is steadily adapting to the tech revolution with interesting results in the following areas:

The Electronic Court Case Management Information System (ECCMIS) rolled out in 2020 by the Judiciary is something that lawyers (a traditionally conservative group preferring dossiers to Google Drive) have had to contend with but have over time adapted to. It took some time, but eventually, even those calling for its termination have become its biggest champions and advocates thanks to the new digital (and paperless) environment for case management.

As can be expected, where human social and economic activities are growing and thriving, there is bound to be an introduction and possibly the growth of criminal activity. The 2022 Annual Crime Report shows that 286

cybercrimes were reported in Uganda in 2022, which is a 10.8% increase from 2021. According to a survey by the National Research Repository of Uganda (NRU), 92% of Uganda's Internet users have experienced cybercrime with the most common incidents being virus and spam attacks. It is expected that cybercrime will be on an upward trend as technology becomes more accessible, more affordable, and more efficient.

The Uganda Police has introduced many new mechanisms to fight crime such as the installation of CCTV cameras in and around Kampala for the identification and prevention of crime. Although these were met with understandable derision and skepticism, the public seemed to welcome them as a much-needed deterrent against crime. These cameras have been used to identify suspects of crimes and bring them to justice.

The UPF Mobi App despite being a decently looking, reasonably designed App seems to be one that no one knows about. A quick survey of my well-educated circle of friends revealed that very few knew anything about it and none of them had downloaded it. With this App, one can report a crime, alert the police to a missing person, and even deal with traffic tickets and fines. However, not many people seem to consider it worthwhile downloading and the few who did worry that it might be used to spy on them. It is one example of a great idea that needs innovative marketing in the public space. On the Google Play Store, the UPF Mobi app has (at the time of writing this article) over 100,000 downloads, with 336 reviews averaging 4.4 stars which means that all things considered it is doing decently. But it could do so much better.

> **There is a need to find innovative ways of connecting with the public and having them participate in (and embrace) these digital public service initiatives.**

The opacity of Government decision-making, despite all the structural provisions for transparency, has long been a conundrum. How is it that so many people failed to register in 2015 for National Identity Cards (a system that led to the digitisation of Ugandans' biodata) after having been informed so early? And how did millions more end up having their SIM cards disconnected for not verifying the numbers with their National IDs after that? A communication gap exists and persists and cannot be ignored. Even where the Government aggressively runs advertisements daily on the most popular radio stations and in newspapers, somehow large swathes of the population seem unprepared or uninformed when the deadlines arrive. There is a need to find innovative ways of connecting with the public and having them participate in (and embrace) digital public service initiatives.

Ironically some of the E-Government processes have proven fruitless and caused a lot of suffering and anguish. One such example is the now infamous Over the Top ("social media") Tax (OTT) passed by the Parliament of Uganda in 2018 which was widely unpopular and fought bitterly, especially by civil society organisations. It was abandoned in 2021 after the Government failed miserably to meet the quarterly revenue collection goals it had set for the Uganda Revenue Authority (URA). However, before the tax failed, social media usage dropped drastically including the use of social media for business, and some speculate that it never truly recovered from this lull.

Another unfortunate attempt was the push for mandatory registration of online platforms and social media influencers operating in Uganda. This was done by the Uganda Communications Commission (UCC) through its regulations on online data communications. Multiple deadlines passed with no action being taken. When I was asked to host a webinar to discuss the implications of these regulations, most of the audience appeared to know nothing about the requirements and provisions of these regulations. It is not clear even today whether these regulations are being adhered to by those who would call themselves influencers.

From an outsider's perspective, E-Government efforts in Uganda have largely been successful. One of the biggest challenges remains buy-in from the public and professionals. Buy-in provides a huge advantage and can be the difference between a poorly implemented but beloved strategy succeeding and a well-implemented but detested one failing.

> **Buy-in provides a huge advantage and can be the difference between a poorly implemented but beloved strategy succeeding and a well-implemented but detested one failing.**

E-Governance is here to stay, but it will only be as effective as it is usable, and the people it serves are its primary customers and the ultimate determinants of its utility. One of the things governments could consider doing is introducing these high-tech solutions to local leaders before the public rollout. If the local council leaders support these efforts, there is a high chance they will lead their community members to embrace these tech solutions and digital-driven initiatives. JLOS

The author is a legal consultant and the Director of Programmes and Impact at Barefoot Law

E-Government Regulatory Framework

The current ICT environment in Uganda is regulated by several Statutes, Laws, Acts, Policies and Regulations. These include:

1.	The Constitution of the Republic of Uganda, 1995 (As Amended);
2.	The Electronic Media Act, 1996
3.	The Communications Act, 1997.
4.	Access to Information Act, 2004
5.	Public Libraries Act, Cap 136, Laws of Uganda.
6.	The Copyrights Act, Cap 215, Laws of Uganda.
7.	Official Secrets Act, Cap 302, Laws of Uganda
8.	Rural Communications Development Policy, 2001
9.	The Press and Journalist Statute, 1995
10.	Information Technology Policy for Uganda
11.	National E-Government Policy Framework
12.	Data Protection and Privacy Regulations (2021)
13.	Computer Misuse Act 2011 (Act No. 2 of 2011)
14.	Data Protection and Privacy Act (2019)
15.	Electronic Signatures Act 2011 (Act No. 7 of 2011)
16.	Electronic Signatures Regulations 2013 - SI 43 of 2013
17	Electronic Transactions Act 2011 (Act No. 8 of 2011)
18	Electronic Transactions Regulations 2013 - SI 42 of 2013


JLOS
Justice for All

Governance and Security Programme (JLOS) Secretariat
Ministry of Justice and Constitutional Affairs
Level 3, Baumann House | Parliament Avenue
P.O. Box 7183, Kampala Uganda
Phone: +256(414)-253207
Email: connect@jlos.go.ug
Website: www.jlos.go.ug