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SPECIAL EDITION

UGANDA'S CRIMINAL JUSTICE REFORM JOURNEY

From prevention and people-centred justice to digital transformation, human rights, integrity and international cooperation

A Justice compendium showcasing Uganda's reform agenda, institutional progress and partnerships

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EDITOR'S NOTE

A reform story measured by outcomes



This compendium tells the story of **Uganda's evolving criminal justice system—where it has come from, what is changing, and where the reform journey must go next.**

Prepared in the context of Uganda's participation at the 15th United Nations Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice in Abu Dhabi, the publication brings together the experiences, evidence and perspectives that shaped Uganda's engagement at the Congress. It draws from statements delivered by the Uganda delegation, institutional reform experiences, civil society contributions, programme data and human-interest accounts to provide a broader picture of criminal justice transformation in the country.

At its heart is a simple proposition: justice is not delivered by one institution, at one moment, or in one place. It begins with safer communities and effective crime prevention; continues through investigation, evidence management, prosecution and adjudication; and extends to corrections, rehabilitation and successful reintegration. Human rights, integrity, technology, data and partnerships must reinforce every stage of that journey.

> **Justice reform becomes meaningful when institutional change is visible in the everyday experience of the person seeking justice.**

The pages that follow therefore look beyond individual projects and institutions. They examine how Uganda is progressively building a more connected, people-centred and evidence-led justice system, while responding to a changing crime environment characterised by cybercrime, illicit financial flows, transnational organised crime and increasingly sophisticated forms of criminal activity.

Importantly, this is not intended to present reform as a completed undertaking. The evidence points to meaningful progress, but also to continuing challenges involving institutional capacity, public confidence, access to justice, human rights protection, integrity, interoperability of digital systems and the need to ensure that justice services reach vulnerable and underserved communities. The compendium deliberately presents these dimensions together because **credible reform must be understood through both achievements and remaining gaps.**

The experiences of civil society organisations and justice users are equally important to this story. They demonstrate that sustainable criminal justice reform cannot be achieved by State institutions acting alone. Communities, civil society, development partners and international organisations bring complementary capabilities in prevention, legal aid, rehabilitation, reintegration, technical assistance and innovation.

Ultimately, this compendium invites the reader to view Uganda's criminal justice reform not simply as a collection of institutional initiatives, but as the gradual construction of a justice ecosystem—one in which institutions work as parts of a connected chain, information supports better decisions, rights and integrity underpin public confidence, and reform is ultimately measured by the experience of the people whom the justice system exists to serve.

This is Uganda's criminal justice reform journey: a journey of progress, partnership and continuous transformation towards a safer society and justice for all.

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From institutional silos to one connected justice chain

Uganda's reform proposition is increasingly about the performance of the whole system



Uganda's criminal justice reform journey is increasingly defined by a shift from institutions operating largely within their individual mandates to a justice system organised around shared outcomes. Under the JLOS chain-linked approach, crime prevention, investigation, prosecution, adjudication, corrections, rehabilitation and reintegration are understood as interconnected stages of a single justice process.

This matters because performance at one stage directly affects the next. The quality of the investigation shapes prosecution; the strength of the evidence influences adjudication; timely case management affects detention and corrections; and effective rehabilitation and reintegration help prevent future crime.

The emerging reform agenda therefore goes beyond strengthening individual institutions. It seeks to strengthen the connections between them, through coordinated planning, improved exchange of information and evidence, digital systems, common standards, institutional partnerships, and a growing focus on the justice user's experience.

The result is a broader vision of criminal justice reform: a connected justice chain in which institutions retain their distinct mandates while working collectively towards safer communities, a stronger rule of law, and justice that is accessible, timely, and people-centred.

33 Institutions in broader JLOS architecture

1 **Justice chain:** prevention to reintegration

- Prevent crime earlier by addressing vulnerability before justice-system contact.
- Build stronger cases through evidence, forensics and prosecutor-investigator coordination.
- Make justice accessible through courts, legal aid, mobile services and digital channels.
- Treat rehabilitation and reintegration as crime-prevention investments.
- Strengthen integrity, human rights and accountability as measures of justice quality.

Analysis

Criminal justice performance is interdependent. A weakness at one stage rarely remains there, it creates pressure elsewhere in the justice chain. Poor-quality investigations can result in weak prosecution files and delayed trials; slow case processing can contribute to prolonged remand and congestion in correctional facilities; and inadequate rehabilitation and reintegration can increase the risk of people returning to the justice system.

This is why Uganda's reform agenda must increasingly focus on how institutions connect and perform collectively, not only on strengthening individual agencies. The real measure of reform is whether cases, evidence and information move efficiently across the chain, institutional mandates reinforce one another, and the combined system produces better outcomes for citizens.

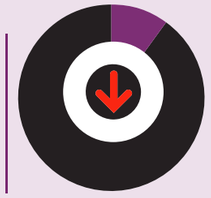
The strategic shift is therefore from institutional efficiency to system-wide justice performance—strengthening every link while ensuring that the links work together

Uganda criminal justice by the numbers

Reading the data behind the reform journey

Cases

196,405 Reported in 2025
115,301 submitted to ODPP
79,291 taken to court
24,899 secured convictions



10.2%
decline from 2024

427.8
Crime rate /100,000

266,000+
cases completed by Judiciary

69% Justice problems rated fairly resolved

62,338
LASPNET clients in 2025

412
cybercrime cases in 2025

85,527
UYDEL aggregate attendances

865
UHRC complaints investigated

The numbers provide more than a snapshot of institutional activity; they reveal a criminal justice system undergoing simultaneous changes in crime patterns, workload, public expectations and institutional capability. They should therefore be read together, not as isolated measures of performance.

The most immediate trend is encouraging. Reported crime declined from **218,715 cases in 2024 to 196,405 in 2025, a 10.2% reduction,** while the reported crime rate fell to **427.8 per 100,000 population.** At the same time, the justice chain continued to manage substantial volumes: **115,301 cases** were submitted to the **ODPP, 79,291** were taken to court, and **24,899 secured convictions,** according to figures presented by Uganda at the Congress.

But the data also show why crime reduction cannot be the sole measure of criminal justice performance. Uganda's justice institutions must simultaneously process existing caseloads, improve access to justice, protect rights and respond to increasingly sophisticated forms of crime. The **412 cybercrime cases reported in 2025,** alongside cases involving money laundering and illicit financial flows, point to a changing threat environment in which individual cases may be growing more complex even as overall reported crime declines.

The figures also reflect an important people-centred dimension. The reported increase from **47% in 2020 to 69%** in justice problems perceived as fairly resolved suggests improvement in citizens' experience of justice. Meanwhile, civil society data, such as **LASPNET's 62,338 clients reached in 2025** and UYDEL's extensive youth and community engagement, demonstrate that access to justice and crime prevention extend well beyond formal case processing.

What the numbers tell us

Taken together, three conclusions emerge. First, Uganda appears to be making progress in reducing the volume of reported crime while improving some measures of justice delivery. Second, the justice system remains under significant pressure from caseloads, staffing constraints and increasingly complex crime. Third, future performance will depend less on the capacity of any single institution and more on the justice chain's ability to share information, build stronger cases, protect rights, resolve matters efficiently, and **prevent future offending.**

The central message behind the numbers is therefore not simply that Uganda is processing more cases or recording fewer crimes. It is that the measure of reform is becoming broader: safer communities, stronger institutions, fairer outcomes and a justice system capable of responding to both conventional and emerging forms of crime.

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The case for intervening earlier

Crime prevention is social policy, community safety and justice policy at the same time

The case for earlier intervention rests on a simple principle: the most effective justice system is not only one that responds well to crime, but one that prevents avoidable harm and justice-system contact in the first place. Uganda's demographic profile makes this particularly important. With 72.3% of the population under the age of 30, prevention strategies directed at young people have potentially significant long-term implications for crime, community safety and future pressure on justice institutions.

The evidence presented at the Crime Congress also shows that vulnerability to crime is rarely driven by a single factor. Unemployment, substance abuse, family instability, school exclusion, psychosocial pressures and limited economic opportunity can combine to increase exposure to offending and victimisation. This strengthens the case for interventions that operate before arrest and prosecution become necessary, through community policing, education, youth engagement, psychosocial support, skills development, diversion and referral to appropriate services.

Earlier intervention also has a system-efficiency benefit. Effective prevention can reduce demand further along the justice chain, allowing police, prosecutors, courts and correctional institutions to concentrate resources on cases requiring formal criminal justice intervention. Diversion and community-based responses can similarly prevent appropriate cases from unnecessarily progressing into prolonged formal proceedings.

The strategic implication is that crime prevention should not sit at the margins of criminal justice policy. It should be treated as the first link in the justice chain,



Sustainable prevention must address conditions that create vulnerability to crime, including youth exclusion, drugs, violence, unemployment, weak family support and community-level risk

supported by evidence, targeted towards identifiable risks and connected to social and economic interventions beyond the traditional justice sector.

In this sense, intervening earlier is not about being softer on crime; it is about addressing risk earlier, preventing victimisation and reducing the likelihood that individuals enter or repeatedly return to the criminal justice system

72.3% population under 30

75% youth share of prison population cited

300+ justice-affected persons receiving rehabilitation support

- Community policing and the Sub-County Policing Model bring prevention closer to communities.
- Diversion, rehabilitation and psychosocial support aim to reduce unnecessary justice-system entry.
- Youth-focused interventions connect prevention messages with skills, sport, counselling and opportunity.

ANALYSIS

A youthful population makes prevention a structural priority. If risk accumulates before arrest, the justice system cannot rely on prosecution alone. The policy challenge is to connect policing with education, health, social protection, livelihoods and credible referral pathways.

Youth prevention at scale

Young people as prevention partners, not simply potential offenders



UYDEL uses sport and positive alternatives as practical entry points for prevention.

86,717
youth charged in 2024 snapshot

11,690
convictions in UYDEL dataset

85,527
aggregate attendances Jan-Aug 2026

- 117 school outreach sessions: 68,741 reported attendances.
- Three sports-prevention galas: 10,918 attendances.
- 24 community-policing barazas: 4,354 attendances.

Analysis

UYDEL's approach shows that effective prevention requires more than awareness campaigns. Its value lies in linking evidence on youth vulnerability to practical interventions—sport, counselling, peer engagement, skills and livelihoods—and in providing pathways to further support where needed.

This integrated model also strengthens the link between community-level experience and justice-sector policy. Information generated through outreach and engagement can identify emerging risks, improve targeting and inform institutional responses.

The broader lesson is that prevention works best as a continuum: identify risk early, provide credible alternatives, connect vulnerable young people with support, and use the resulting evidence to continuously improve policy and programming.

UYDEL states that 85,527 is aggregate attendance, not unique beneficiaries.

Building stronger cases through evidence

The quality of justice downstream depends heavily on the quality of investigation upstream

189
prosecutors reached through mentorship

400-500
stakeholders annually through symposiums

59.7%
case-disposal rate cited

Case quality has consequences throughout the justice chain. Weak investigations, incomplete evidence or poorly prepared case files are not merely an investigative problem; they can lead to repeated requests for further inquiries, adjournments, delayed prosecutions and longer case resolution times. These inefficiencies ultimately place additional pressure on prosecutors, courts and correctional institutions.

The reform opportunity is therefore to improve the quality, completeness and continuity of evidence from the earliest stages of a case. Prosecution-Guided Investigations can strengthen early collaboration between investigators and prosecutors, while greater use of forensic, digital and financial evidence can support more objective, better-prepared cases.

Digitalisation should reinforce this process rather than merely convert paper files into electronic records. A connected case-management environment should enable evidence tracking, preserve its integrity and chain of custody, identify outstanding investigative actions, reduce duplication, and maintain a reliable record as the case moves between institutions.

The wider implications are significant: better evidence at the start of the justice chain can yield efficiencies throughout the system, stronger prosecutorial decisions, fewer avoidable delays, more effective adjudication, and ultimately greater confidence in criminal justice outcomes.

Uganda is strengthening the investigator-prosecutor interface through Prosecution-Guided Investigations, specialised capacity and greater emphasis on scientific, digital and financial evidence.

- Earlier prosecutor engagement can improve evidential sufficiency before court.
- Forensic science supports objective fact-finding and evidential reliability.
- Digital evidence requires specialist preservation, analysis and presentation skills.



Financial intelligence as a criminal justice capability

Modern crime leaves financial as well as physical and digital traces

18
money-laundering cases in 2025

UGX 20bn
approx. value associated

UGX 1.2bn
approx. value in one Terrorism Financing (TF) case in 2025



Uganda increasingly treats financial intelligence, asset tracing and illicit-finance analysis as core criminal justice capabilities.

- Goal expansion has included casinos, foreign-exchange bureaus and insurers.
- Financial intelligence can help identify patterns, networks and assets.
- Effective use depends on secure, lawful and timely exchange between competent authorities.

Financial intelligence adds an important dimension to criminal investigation because many serious crimes ultimately generate, move or conceal financial value. Tracing these transactions can help investigators move beyond individual offences to identify the wider networks, beneficiaries, assets and financial structures that sustain organised criminal activity.

This is particularly significant for organised, transnational and digitally enabled crime, where perpetrators, victims, financial accounts and assets may span several jurisdictions. Financial intelligence can therefore complement conventional investigation by revealing relationships that may not be immediately apparent from physical or testimonial evidence alone.

The strategic opportunity is to bring financial investigation into cases earlier and more systematically, thereby strengthening collaboration between the Financial Intelligence Authority, Police, ODPP and other competent institutions. This can support stronger evidence, asset identification and more effective prosecution of complex criminal networks.

Ultimately, the objective is not merely to prosecute individual offenders, but to disrupt the financial infrastructure that makes serious and organised crime profitable and sustainable. In this sense, following the money serves as both an investigative tool and a broader crime-prevention strategy.

Measuring justice by the citizen experience

Access is not only the existence of courts - it is the ability to understand, reach and use them

69%
justice problems rated fairly resolved

47%
comparable figure in 2020

1.7m
refugees hosted

- Mobile courts extend adjudication closer to communities and refugee settlements.
- ECCMIS digitises filing, payments and case tracking.
- The ODPP Call Centre expands public access to prosecution services.
- Audio-visual links support remote, remand and vulnerable-witness participation.



Analysis

The 22-percentage-point improvement in perceived fairness—from 47% in 2020 to 69%—is an important indicator of progress. However, national averages can mask significant differences in how people experience the justice system. Meaningful access must therefore be assessed not only by whether justice institutions and services exist, but also by who can reach them, at what cost, how quickly, and with what outcome.

Geography remains important. People in rural, remote and refugee-hosting communities may face higher travel costs and fewer nearby justice services. Economic circumstances can determine whether a person can obtain legal advice or representation, while disability, language and limited legal literacy can make even physically accessible services difficult to navigate. These barriers can disproportionately affect vulnerable and marginalised groups.

Digitalisation offers an important response. Electronic filing, online case tracking, digital payments, virtual proceedings and other remote services can reduce travel, waiting times and transaction costs. But digital access should complement, not replace, physical and community-based services. Limited connectivity, affordability, digital skills and confidence in online processes can create a new form of exclusion if these factors are not addressed.

The strategic objective should therefore shift from simply expanding access points to ensuring equitable access. Mobile courts, legal aid, community outreach, and accessible digital services need to work together so that a person's location, income, or circumstances do not determine their ability to obtain justice.

The deeper measure of access is consequently not how many justice services are available, but whether people can effectively use those services and experience the justice process as accessible, timely and fair.

Technology still needs people

Judges, prosecutors, investigators, forensic specialists and correctional professionals remain the operating system

122
judicial posts being filled

100+
prosecutors promoted

<50%
prosecution staffing level described



- Digital-evidence handling and cybercrime investigation
- Forensic science and expert interpretation.
- Financial investigation and asset tracing.
- Case management and justice-data analysis.
- International cooperation, Mutual Legal Assistance (MLA) and extradition practice.

Analysis

Digital transformation can make justice services faster, more transparent and easier to coordinate, but technology does not replace the professional capacity required to deliver justice. Electronic case-management systems may improve workflow, for example, but investigators must still build credible cases, prosecutors must assess evidence, judicial officers must make informed decisions, and correctional professionals must manage rehabilitation and reintegration.

The risk is that digitalisation can shift rather than eliminate bottlenecks. Faster electronic transmission of case files will have limited impact if there are insufficient prosecutors to review them, judicial officers to hear cases, forensic specialists to analyse evidence, or technical personnel to maintain the systems. This is particularly important in Uganda, which is simultaneously expanding digital justice while confronting increasingly specialised areas such as cybercrime, digital evidence, financial investigation and transnational organised crime.

Technology also creates new workforce requirements. Justice professionals increasingly need competencies in digital evidence, data protection, cybersecurity, electronic case management, forensic analysis, and interpreting technology-generated information. ICT personnel, data analysts, and system administrators therefore become part of the wider justice-delivery workforce.

The strategic implication is that digital and human-capital investment must go hand in hand. Workforce planning should anticipate the skills, staffing levels and institutional roles required by new technologies, while continuous professional development ensures that existing personnel can work effectively within increasingly digital processes.

The real productivity gain comes not from technology alone, but from combining capable people, well-designed processes and suitable technology.



5,700+
institutional staff trained in HRBA

865
UHRC complaints investigated FY2024 / 25

- Human rights desks and detention monitoring strengthen accountability in custodial settings.
- Legal aid and public legal awareness make rights usable by people who cannot afford representation.
- HRBA training emphasises participation, accountability, non-discrimination and transparency.

From constitutional promise to everyday justice

Human rights are increasingly embedded in detention, legal aid, child justice and public service delivery

Human rights become meaningful when they are translated from constitutional and legal guarantees into the routine decisions, procedures and institutional practices of the justice system. For Uganda, the reform challenge is therefore not simply whether rights are recognised in law, but whether they shape what happens when a person encounters the police, prosecution services, courts, prisons and other justice institutions.

This represents an important shift in how human rights are understood within criminal justice. Rather than treating rights protection as a separate compliance function, the emerging approach is to embed it throughout the justice chain—from arrest and detention to legal representation, trial, sentencing, rehabilitation and reintegration

Analysis

Rights protection is not a separate compliance activity; it is fundamental to the quality and legitimacy of justice delivery. Respect for rights affects how evidence is obtained, how people are arrested and detained, whether vulnerable people can access legal assistance, and whether justice processes are perceived as fair.

Embedding human rights into everyday procedures can therefore strengthen the quality of evidence, accountability, public trust and institutional performance. Mechanisms such as detention monitoring, legal aid, complaint systems and rights-based professional standards help translate constitutional protections into practical safeguards.
The reform objective is to embed human rights in routine justice administration and performance measurement, so that success is assessed not only by the number of cases processed or convictions secured, but also by whether justice is delivered lawfully, fairly, promptly and with dignity.

Dignity and due process across the justice chain

Human rights are increasingly embedded in detention, legal aid, child justice and public service delivery

17
facilities in Uganda Prisons reported to have abolished the bucket system

16%
prison units where practice reportedly remained

40,000+
JCU cases handled in 2023

92
released after legal intervention

5 → 3 mo.
reported fall in juvenile remand

10,000+
child cases heard within remand period

More than 80% of children in conflict with the law received legal representation during the reporting period, and Uganda met five of six key benchmarks referenced in UNICEF's 2024 child-justice report.

Analysis

Human-rights performance becomes meaningful when measured against the actual conditions people experience in the justice system. Sanitation and detention conditions, access to legal representation, remand duration, complaint mechanisms and timely case handling translate broad constitutional protections into observable standards for justice delivery.

These indicators also reveal how weaknesses in one part of the system can become rights concerns elsewhere. Delayed investigations and case processing can contribute to prolonged remand; limited access to legal assistance can weaken a person's ability to navigate proceedings; poor detention conditions affect dignity; and inaccessible complaint mechanisms can leave institutional failures without an effective remedy.

Operational measurement therefore enables justice institutions to move from general commitments to identifying performance gaps and implementing corrective action. Data on remand periods, legal-aid coverage, detention inspections, complaints and case timeliness can help identify recurring bottlenecks, vulnerable groups and locations requiring greater institutional attention. The strategic shift is from asking simply whether human rights are protected in law to asking whether they are consistently realised in practice. This makes human-rights indicators part of mainstream justice-sector performance management—alongside crime rates, case disposal, conviction rates and institutional efficiency.

Ultimately, a rights-based justice system should be able to demonstrate not only what institutions deliver, but also how justice is delivered: lawfully, promptly, fairly and with dignity.



Rights must be understood before they can be claimed

Community dialogue, accessible information and complaint mechanisms widen the reach of justice

3,000+
people reached through barazas

8,000+
community outreach reach

44
languages for Bill of Rights

13
regional detention meetings

340
participants committing to corrective measures

70+
GBV cases reported around outreach

- Braille versions widen accessibility for persons with disabilities.
- One-Stop Centres combine medical, psychosocial and legal services for SGBV survivors.
- Refugee outreach uses translated materials and documentation support.

Analysis

The data suggest an important shift from institution-centred rights protection to user-centred rights access. Legal aid, community outreach, translated rights information, detention monitoring and complaint mechanisms increasingly focus on whether individuals can understand, access and exercise their rights, not merely on whether institutional safeguards formally exist.

The next challenge is to measure what these interventions actually change. Awareness should ultimately translate into a greater ability to report violations and seek assistance; legal representation should contribute to fairer and more timely proceedings; detention monitoring should produce measurable improvements in conditions; and complaint mechanisms should result in investigation, remedy and institutional corrective action. This requires moving beyond activity and output indicators - such as people reached, inspections conducted, or complaints received- towards outcome indicators that measure whether rights protection delivers tangible improvements in people's experience of justice.

The analytical question therefore is: Did the intervention make a difference? Did legal awareness improve access to remedies? Did detention monitoring reduce repeat violations? Did legal assistance reduce unnecessary or prolonged remand? Were complaints resolved effectively? Did vulnerable groups experience improved access and treatment?

Over time, these outcomes should also contribute to the broader objective of public trust and institutional legitimacy. The next generation of human-rights measurement should therefore link institutional activity to citizen experience, demonstrating not only that safeguards exist, but that they consistently deliver fairer treatment, effective remedies, safer conditions and sustained confidence in the justice system.

Public confidence is part of justice performance

Anti-corruption reform must address misconduct and the conditions that enable it



56%
perceiving most/all judges & magistrates as corrupt

+27 pts
rise in that perception, 2012-2024

72%
saying government performs poorly fighting corruption

Analysis

Perception data do not reflect the proven incidence of corruption, but they remain important because justice depends on both public confidence and institutional performance. Where citizens perceive judicial processes as vulnerable to bribery, influence, or interference, trust can weaken even when formal safeguards exist.

The reform test is therefore twofold. First, institutions must reduce opportunities for corruption by limiting unnecessary discretion and informal transactions, strengthening oversight, improving transparency, and using digital systems for functions such as filing, payments, and case tracking. These measures can reduce vulnerabilities while creating stronger audit trails and accountability.

Second, accountability must be visible and credible. Complaint mechanisms, investigations, disciplinary processes and corrective action must demonstrate that integrity breaches carry consequences. Transparency about how institutions respond to complaints can help narrow the gap between internal reform and public perception.

Digitalisation can support this agenda, but technology alone is insufficient. Integrity also depends on professional ethics, institutional leadership, effective supervision, and enforceable accountability mechanisms.

Ultimately, anti-corruption reform should be measured not only by the systems introduced or cases investigated, but also by whether citizens experience fewer opportunities for improper influence, greater transparency, credible accountability, and increased confidence that justice decisions are based on law and evidence rather than on personal connections or the ability to pay.

A, 2021 Inspectorate of Government estimate of up to UGX 9.1 trillion in annual losses to corruption.

Government Transparency Institute (GTI)

Closing the opportunity space for corruption

Oversight, digitalisation, public reporting and enforcement work best as a package

Digital filing
reduces discretionary contact

Regional inspectorate
brings complaints closer

72%
make integrity visible

- High Court Anti-Corruption Division for specialised handling of corruption cases.
- Court inspectorate headed by a Supreme Court judge, with registrars and circuit sub-inspectors.
- Toll-free public reporting channels.
- ECCMIS online filing, payments and case tracking, reducing some face-to-face transactions.
- Open days, media engagement and public sensitisation.
- Prosecution of judicial and non-judicial staff accused of corruption, as reported in the article.

Analysis

Digitalisation can reduce opportunities for rent-seeking by limiting unnecessary face-to-face interactions, standardising processes and reducing reliance on discretionary manual transactions. Electronic filing, digital payments, automated case allocation and online case tracking can also make transactions more traceable and reduce opportunities for files, payments or decisions to be manipulated informally.

However, digitising a weak process does not automatically make it accountable. Integrity risks can migrate into digital environments through unauthorised system access, record manipulation, inappropriate user privileges, or weak oversight. Digital transformation must therefore be accompanied by controls that ensure actions are attributable, traceable and reviewable.

A robust integrity architecture requires secure audit trails, role-based access controls, transparent service standards, accessible complaint mechanisms, regular monitoring and credible disciplinary action. System-generated data can also serve as an important management tool - helping institutions identify unusual transactions, unexplained delays, repeated case interventions or other patterns requiring further review.

Public communication is equally important. Citizens need to know what services should cost, how long processes should take, where to report misconduct, and what happens after a complaint is made. Transparency reduces information asymmetry and makes it harder for informal practices to become normalised.

The strategic opportunity is therefore to use technology as part of a broader integrity and accountability framework. Digitalisation can reduce vulnerabilities and strengthen oversight, but lasting anti-corruption gains depend on combining technology with transparent procedures, effective supervision, enforceable accountability and a visible institutional response.



300+
justice-affected persons reached

Rights + access
people-centred principle

Reintegration
links corrections back to prevention

Uganda's reform narrative increasingly treats corrections as a bridge back to society rather than the end of the justice chain. Rehabilitation, psychosocial support, vocational skills and reintegration can reduce repeated justice-system contact.

Rehabilitation and reintegration are crime-prevention investments

Justice does not end at sentencing

Analysis

The criminal justice chain should be understood as circular rather than purely linear. Prevention seeks to reduce entry into the justice system; fair investigation, prosecution, and adjudication protect the system's legitimacy throughout the process; and effective rehabilitation and reintegration reduce the likelihood of individuals returning to the system.

This focuses on corrections rather than the final stage of case processing. What happens during and after custody can influence future community safety. Education, vocational skills, psychosocial support, family connections and structured reintegration can help address factors that may otherwise contribute to reoffending.

Reintegration is particularly important because release returns individuals to communities where they may face stigma, unemployment, disrupted family relationships and limited economic opportunities. Without effective transition and community support, gains made through rehabilitation can be difficult to sustain.

The strategic implication is that corrections policy should sit within the broader crime-prevention architecture. Police, prisons, social services, local authorities, civil society and communities therefore have complementary roles in supporting successful reintegration.

Ultimately, justice-system performance should consider not only how cases conclude but also what happens afterwards. A system that reduces reoffending through effective rehabilitation and reintegration strengthens public safety while reducing future demand on police, prosecutors, courts and correctional institutions.

From case to person

Legal aid, rehabilitation and reintegration as one continuum

62,338
clients reached in 2025

700+
prison cases handled in 2026

Cross-district
referral pathway

- Legal aid: information, advice and representation.
- Psychosocial and practical support during and after custody.
- Reintegration into family, community and opportunity.
- Evidence-based advocacy to identify systemic barriers.
- Partnership by design: clear roles, referrals, dialogue, coordinated support and accountability.

> **Justice should not only be available in our laws and institutions; it must be accessible to the person who needs it.**
>
> *Dr. Sylvia Namubiru – CEO, LASPNET*



Analysis

LASPNET addresses an important dimension that conventional case statistics can easily overlook: whether a justice user can navigate the system from one stage to the next. Case registrations, disposal rates and court outcomes measure institutional activity, but they do not necessarily reveal whether individuals understood the process, obtained legal assistance, accessed necessary referrals or received support after formal proceedings ended.

Its model therefore reframes access to justice as a continuum rather than a single service encounter. Legal information and representation relate to psychosocial support, referrals, rehabilitation and reintegration, recognising that justice needs can continue before, during and after a case.

This is particularly important for vulnerable justice users, for whom a single unresolved barrier can derail the entire justice journey. A person may receive legal advice yet still struggle to access representation, comply with procedures, obtain necessary support, or successfully reintegrate into the community.

LASPNET's emphasis on referral pathways and coordination highlights a broader systemic lesson: access depends as much on connections between services as on the availability of individual services. Government institutions and civil society can provide complementary capabilities, and clear referral arrangements help prevent people from falling through institutional gaps.
The next measurement challenge is therefore to move beyond counting services delivered towards tracking continuity and outcomes: whether users successfully move between services, obtain appropriate assistance, resolve their justice needs and sustain rehabilitation and reintegration.

The strategic focus is shifting from assessing access points to evaluating justice pathways, emphasizing whether the system supports individuals throughout their journey instead of only at their initial encounter with an institution.

From digitising institutions to exchanging justice information

The next frontier is interoperability

- Police: crime tracking, CCTV, digital investigation and forensic capability.
- ODPP: case management, guided investigations and public-access channels.
- Judiciary: ECCMIS, electronic filing, payments and case tracking.
- Prisons: audio-visual links supporting remote remand and other proceedings.
- Sector direction: secure exchange of case and evidence information across institutions.



Analysis

The value of digital justice is not measured by the number of platforms deployed, but by whether technology improves the flow of cases, evidence and information across the justice chain. Multiple stand-alone systems can replicate the same institutional silos that existed under paper-based processes, only in digital form.

The greater reform opportunity lies in interoperability. A connected justice environment should reduce repeated data entry, manual file transfers and unnecessary requests for information as a case moves through investigation, prosecution, adjudication and corrections. Information should be captured appropriately and then made securely available to authorised institutions when required.

This can deliver significant operational benefits: fewer administrative hand-offs, better case visibility, stronger evidence traceability, reduced duplication and more timely decision-making. It can also strengthen accountability by creating reliable audit trails that show who accessed, changed, transmitted or acted upon information.

However, connectivity introduces new governance requirements. Institutions must agree on data standards, access rights, information-sharing protocols, system ownership, accountability and cybersecurity responsibilities. Without appropriate governance, interoperability can create new risks, including unauthorised access, inaccurate data propagation, privacy breaches and compromised information.

The real maturity test for digital justice is therefore not simply whether institutions have automated their individual processes, but whether they can exchange trusted information securely while preserving institutional mandates and accountability.

The strategic progression is from digitisation → automation → interoperability → data-driven justice. At its most mature, digital transformation should enable the justice chain not only to process cases electronically but also to use reliable, connected information to identify bottlenecks, improve decisions, strengthen accountability and manage system-wide performance.

> **Right information. Right institution. Right time.**
>
> *JLOS principle on Connected-Justice*

Fewer reported crimes, more complex threats

Cybercrime, virtual assets and organised networks are changing the capability requirement

412
cybercrime cases in 2025

AI + encryption
new investigative complexity

Cross-border
digital evidence & finance

- Intelligence-led investigation and analysis.
- Cybercrime and digital-forensics expertise.
- Financial intelligence and asset tracing.
- Secure inter-agency information exchange.
- Capacity to investigate networks operating across jurisdictions.



Analysis

The central risk is capability asymmetry: criminal networks can adopt new technologies, move funds, communicate across jurisdictions and reorganise their operations faster than traditional justice institutions can adapt. Cybercrime, virtual assets, encrypted communications and cross-border financial flows increasingly blur the lines between conventional, financial and digital crime.

Uganda's response therefore requires specialist capability without creating new specialist silos. Dedicated expertise in cybercrime, digital forensics, financial intelligence and organised crime is essential, but the impact of that expertise will depend on how effectively it supports ordinary investigators, prosecutors and judicial processes.

The strategic priority is to build mechanisms that make specialist knowledge available early in the life of a case. This means stronger referral pathways, multidisciplinary investigations, prosecution-guided investigations, access to forensic and financial intelligence, and clear procedures for escalating complex cases to specialist units.

Capability also extends beyond technology. Increasingly complex investigations require specialised skills, appropriate legal frameworks, secure information exchange and effective international cooperation, particularly when evidence, offenders, financial transactions or service providers are located outside Uganda.

The objective is therefore not to make every justice professional a specialist. It is to build a system in which frontline officers can recognise emerging complexity, know when specialist intervention is required, and rapidly connect a case to the necessary expertise.

Ultimately, institutional resilience will depend on whether the justice system can learn and adapt at a pace closer to the threats it confronts—connecting specialist capabilities to mainstream justice delivery while continuously strengthening skills, technology, intelligence and cross-border cooperation.



- Ratification of the Trafficking in Persons and Smuggling of Migrants Protocols in 2024.
- Early signature of the UN Convention against Cybercrime in Hanoi in October 2025.
- Modernisation of Uganda's decades-old Extradition Act.
- International engagement informing Mutual Legal Assistance Guidelines and practice exchange.

International cooperation is now operational infrastructure

Extradition, mutual legal assistance and information exchange increasingly determine whether complex cases can be completed

Analysis

For digital, financial and organised crime, international cooperation is no longer an occasional diplomatic process; it can be an operational part of investigations and prosecutions. Service providers may hold digital evidence abroad, financial transactions may pass through multiple jurisdictions, assets may be located overseas, and suspects or witnesses may cross borders.

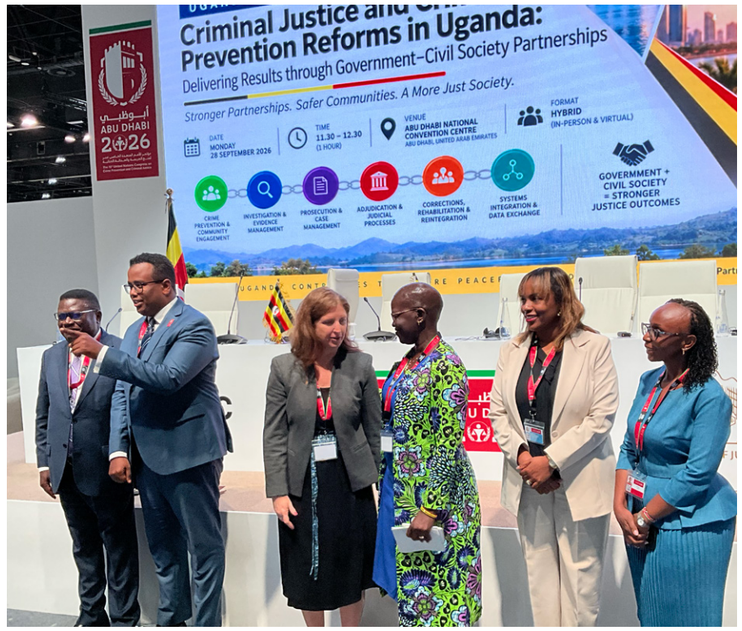
This means that delays in international cooperation can become domestic case delays. Slow mutual legal assistance, evidence requests, asset tracing or extradition processes can interrupt investigations, weaken evidential continuity and prolong proceedings, even when domestic institutions are otherwise ready to act.

The reform opportunity is therefore to integrate international cooperation earlier into case planning. Investigators and prosecutors should identify cross-border dimensions at the outset of complex cases, determine the appropriate cooperation mechanism, and engage designated focal points before evidential or procedural deadlines become critical.

Institutional capacity is equally important. Trained focal points, standard procedures, clear lines of authority, request templates, and effective coordination among investigators, prosecutors, central authorities, and foreign counterparts can reduce avoidable administrative delays and improve the quality of outgoing requests.

Digital case tracking can further strengthen this process by providing visibility into when requests were submitted, which authority is responsible, what information remains outstanding and where follow-up is required. This turns international cooperation from a largely correspondence-driven process into a manageable part of case workflow.

The strategic shift is therefore from treating international cooperation as an external step to recognising it as integral to domestic criminal justice capability. For increasingly borderless forms of crime, the effectiveness of Uganda's justice system will depend, in part, on how quickly and reliably it can link a domestic case to evidence, assets and competent authorities beyond its borders.



Netherlands
programme support

UNODC
technical partnership

CSOs
Community reach & legal aid

Uganda's Crime Congress side event placed Government-civil society partnership at the centre of reform. UYDEL demonstrates the prevention end of the chain; LASPNET demonstrates access, legal aid and reintegration; development partners support institutional capacity and programme scale.

Government + civil society + development cooperation

The strongest partnerships connect external support to national systems

Analysis

The policy lesson is to shift from project-based partnerships to design-based partnerships. Government–civil society collaboration should not depend primarily on individual projects, temporary funding arrangements or informal relationships. Where civil society provides complementary capabilities in prevention, legal aid, rehabilitation, reintegration and community engagement, those contributions should be systematically integrated into the formal justice chain.

This requires clear institutional roles and referral pathways. Justice users should be able to move between government and civil society services without repeatedly restarting their journey, while institutions should know when, how and to whom to refer cases or support needs. Common data and reporting standards can further improve continuity while protecting confidentiality and institutional mandates.

Sustainability is equally important. Predictable financing and institutionalised coordination mechanisms enable successful interventions to extend beyond short project cycles. This also requires accountability: agreed outcomes, service standards, monitoring arrangements and feedback mechanisms should show what each partner contributes and whether collaboration is improving justice outcomes.

Partnership by design also strengthens the link between community experience and policy reform. Civil society can surface emerging needs and barriers faced by justice users, while government institutions provide the authority, scale and institutional infrastructure needed to translate lessons into systemic change.

The strategic shift is therefore from asking which organisation delivers a particular project to considering how different capabilities fit together within a single justice system. When roles, referrals, information exchange, financing and accountability are embedded in the architecture of justice delivery, partnership becomes a sustained institutional capability rather than an exceptional intervention.

> **"The reform opportunity is not Government or civil society - it is Government with civil society."**
>
> *Dr. Rogers Kasirye – Executive Director, UYDEL*

Five cross-cutting conclusions

The data and stories point to a reform agenda broader than case disposal

Prevention and justice are one continuum

Youth risk, community safety, diversion, rehabilitation and reintegration all affect future justice demand.

Rights and integrity are performance measures

A system cannot be effective if it processes cases quickly but users experience abuse, bribery, or exclusion.

Digitalisation changes control as well as speed

Electronic filing, payments and audit trails can improve access and reduce discretionary contact, but only with strong governance.

Capacity is the binding constraint

Specialised crime, digital evidence and international cooperation require people with skills, not only platforms.

Partnership must become institutional

Government, CSOs and development partners generate greater value when roles and referral pathways are built into routine delivery.

Justice reform becomes meaningful when institutional change is visible in the everyday experience of the person seeking justice.

OVERALL ANALYSIS

Uganda's reform story is increasingly shifting from strengthening individual institutions to strengthening the justice ecosystem. Institutional capacity remains essential, but justice outcomes ultimately depend on how effectively mandates, people, processes, information and services connect across the chain.

This shifts the unit of reform. The question is no longer only whether the Police investigate effectively, prosecutors manage cases efficiently, courts dispose of cases promptly, or prisons rehabilitate offenders. It is also whether evidence moves reliably between institutions, decisions are informed by the right information, rights are protected throughout the process, and bottlenecks are addressed collectively rather than being transferred from one institution to another.

Ecosystem-building therefore requires several reforms to converge. Digitalisation and interoperability connect information; human-capital development ensures institutions can use new capabilities; human-rights standards and integrity safeguards protect legitimacy; while civil society and international partnerships extend prevention, legal aid, rehabilitation, reintegration and specialised cooperation beyond what individual institutions can deliver alone.

It also changes how performance should be measured. Institutional output remains important, but the stronger test is system-wide outcomes: whether crime is prevented, cases move more efficiently, evidence quality improves, justice becomes more accessible, rights are protected, corruption risks are reduced, and rehabilitation lowers the likelihood of reoffending.

The next stage of Uganda's reform journey is therefore fundamentally about connection and alignment, building strong institutions and ensuring they function as parts of a justice ecosystem organised around shared outcomes.
The strategic shift is from asking, "How well is each institution performing?" to also asking, "How well is the justice system performing as a connected whole for the people it serves?"

From reform initiatives to a justice ecosystem

Six priorities for the next phase

Connect justice information
Move from institutional systems to governed interoperability and secure evidence exchange.

Invest in people
Close staffing gaps and deepen digital, forensic, financial and international-cooperation skills.

Prevent earlier
Scale evidence-led youth, community and diversion interventions linked to real services.

Make rights measurable
Track detention conditions, legal representation, remand time, complaint resolution and inclusion.

Design integrity into services
Use digital audit trails, transparent standards, inspectorates and accessible complaint channels.

Institutionalise partnership
Build CSO and development-partner collaboration into referrals, planning, data and financing.

The next phase should be judged less by the number of stand-alone initiatives and more by whether Uganda can produce a justice chain that is faster, fairer, more trusted, more rights-compliant, and better able to respond to complex crime.

Measuring the Next Phase by Outcomes

The next phase of reform should be judged less by the number of stand-alone initiatives launched and more by whether those investments deliver measurable improvements across the justice chain. New systems, infrastructure, policies and programmes are important, but they are means to better justice outcomes rather than ends in themselves.

A faster justice chain should reduce avoidable delays, duplication and manual hand-offs. A fairer, more rights-compliant system should improve access to legal assistance, detention practices, procedural safeguards and timely case resolution. A more trusted system should demonstrate transparency, integrity and credible accountability in ways citizens can experience.

At the same time, effectiveness must include the capacity to respond to complex and evolving crime. This requires stronger digital and forensic capability, financial intelligence, specialist expertise, international cooperation and secure information exchange, connected to mainstream investigation, prosecution and adjudication rather than operating as isolated capabilities.

The next reform phase should therefore emphasise consolidation, integration and measurable outcomes. The key question is not merely what has been introduced, but what has changed as a result: Are cases moving faster? Is the evidence stronger? Are rights better protected? Are justice services more accessible? Is public confidence improving? Can institutions respond more effectively to sophisticated crime?

The maturity of Uganda's reform journey will ultimately be demonstrated when institutional investments translate into system-wide results that citizens can see and experience.

EDITORIAL ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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> **One justice system. One connected chain. Stronger institutions, safer communities and justice that people can reach.**
>
> *Criminal Justice Reform Journey*



Human Rights:
The key to
Development
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UHRC

Governance and Security Programme Secretariat
Ministry of Justice and Constitutional Affairs
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Justice for All