



Dedicated to people-centred justice

E-justice and Support Measures: Best Practices and Challenges in East and West Africa



Introduction

In a recently published report, HiiL addresses the issue of access to justice in the specific security context of Burkina Faso, focusing on hard-to-reach populations for whom physical access to a court is difficult or even impossible. The report provides a number of recommendations to improve access to justice in insecure areas. This includes a recommendation to support and accelerate the digital transition initiated by the justice sector. Specific examples of this include the strengthening of access to legal information through inclusive and sustainable digital solutions (recommendation 2.1) and digitalisation of hearings (recommendation 2.2). Importantly, the report notes that although the mobile phone penetration rate is increasing in Burkina Faso, internet access remains uneven, as do basic digital skills, particularly for the most vulnerable. The report therefore highlights the need for accompanying support measures so that digitisation does not exclude vulnerable populations, especially individuals with limited connectivity or digital literacy (recommendation 2.3). To follow up on these recommendations, the report recommends identifying best practices developed in other countries and adapting them to the context of Burkina Faso.

The current report sets out to implement these recommendations by providing an analysis of ongoing digitalisation efforts in a selected number of African countries, identifying both best practices and operational challenges encountered during the implementation of digitalisation efforts. It focuses on both Anglo-Saxon and Francophone countries in East and West Africa and describes both digitalisation efforts and support measures to ensure digital inclusion for the most vulnerable segments of society. These case studies can provide inspiration as well as important lessons learned for Burkina Faso. The countries selected for the case studies were chosen on the basis of their e-justice efforts (including accompanying measures) as well as the availability of relevant resources, such as literature or evaluation reports.¹

The remainder of the report is structured as follows. It first outlines the concept of e-justice and highlights the importance of support measures. It then examines the case studies, covering Rwanda and Tanzania in East Africa, as well as Ghana, Côte d'Ivoire, Senegal, and Benin in West Africa. The report finishes with a set of conclusions and implications, highlighting the most important lessons learned from the case studies. These elements aim to inform and support Burkina Faso in its ongoing efforts to leverage e-justice to enhance access to justice for all.

¹ As many of these initiatives are still relatively recent, the amount of relevant material tends to be limited.

E-justice and the digital divide

The COVID-19 pandemic spurred the development and implementation of e-justice solutions and in recent years many African countries have started ambitious plans to digitalise their justice systems. Some of these plans are primarily aimed at improving the working environment of legal professionals (judges, lawyers, etc), while others also focus on improving access to justice for ordinary people.

E-justice is essentially an umbrella term for all types of digitisation and digitalisation of justice services, from online case management systems to virtual hearings. It is important to keep in mind that digitalisation should not be considered as a solution in and of itself. Rather, digitalisation should be seen as a means to achieve better outcomes for the justice users. This can include cheaper and faster procedures or better access for people who tend to be left behind. It is also important to keep in mind that the technology itself is often the most straightforward aspect of a digitalisation strategy, while the human behavioural component presents significantly bigger challenges.

While e-justice has the potential to significantly increase access to justice for some of the most vulnerable groups in society, socio-economic factors often prevent these same individuals from using new technologies. Particularly in many African countries, the digital divide is a major obstacle to the use of technology for facilitating greater inclusion and access to public services, including justice. Women, individuals in rural or remote areas, people with lower levels of education, people with disabilities, and displaced populations are often far less likely to have access to the internet, smartphones, or even electricity. Any strategy seeking to leverage e-justice to improve access to justice for traditionally underserved populations must therefore incorporate measures to bridge the digital divide, to avoid exacerbating existing inequalities.

What can be digit(al)ised?

In the context of e-justice, a distinction can be drawn between digitisation and digitalisation. The former refers to transforming existing processes and workflows into a digital format, while the latter encompasses entirely new processes made possible by digital technologies. For the purposes of this report, the term digitalisation is used to cover both concepts.

In earlier research HiiL categorised justice innovations into seven gamechangers: justice service delivery models that are sustainable, scalable and have the potential to bring solutions to people for their most pressing justice needs.² However, not all of these are based on technology or digitalisation.

In addition to these gamechanger categories, HiiL also identified six different categories of government-led technology innovations currently in use. Although there is some overlap

² These are: 1) Online information and advice portals; 2) One-stop shop dispute resolution tribunals; 3) Community justice services; 4) User-friendly contracts; 5) Problem-solving courts; 6) Prevention programmes; 7) Claiming platforms.

with the gamechanger categories, these innovations all rely on technology and digitalisation and are driven by governmental efforts. Concurrently, UNDP has identified six specific technologies in their report on e-justice. Although there is some overlap with the categories identified by HiiL, there are also some significant differences. The table below lists the categories identified by HiiL and UNDP.

HiiL	UNDP
Court digitalisation	Apps and individual user tools
Electronic court management software	Artificial intelligence and machine learning
E-kiosks	Digital case management
Registration systems	Online dispute resolution
Surveillance and forecasting tools	System-wide data collection
Virtual trials	Virtual and remote courts

There is some overlap between the categories identified by HiiL and those identified by UNDP, but there are also some differences. Although some of these technological innovations are explicitly people-centred, focused on the user experience, others are aimed at justice providers or the state in general rather than justice users. Combining these two overviews and focussing on examples that are people-centred in nature, we can identify the following technological innovations that seem particularly promising to improve access to justice.

- Digital case management (if it includes options for easy filing)
- Online access to legal information and advice (including through e-kiosks)
- Court digitalisation, including virtual and remote hearings
- Online dispute resolution mechanisms (outside formal courts)

As the case studies below illustrate, many African countries are adopting one or more of these approaches, often accompanied by support measures aimed at bridging the digital divide.

Case studies

African countries differ widely in the extent to which they have adopted one or more elements of e-justice. According to the United Nation's E-Government Development Index (EGDI), the East and West African countries (that are not Island States) with the highest EGDI score are Ghana, Kenya, Rwanda, and Côte d'Ivoire, with the latter two having recently moved up from the middle to the high EGDI group. The case studies below showcase a combination of countries with more advanced EGDI scores and countries with lower scores to get a good understanding of some of the best practices and challenges when it comes to e-justice and bridging the digital divide, discussing two countries from East Africa and four countries from West Africa.

East Africa

In East Africa, Kenya and Rwanda often stand out for their progress in digitalisation, while Uganda, for its part, shows promising results. Below we first examine Rwanda, which has a highly developed e-justice ecosystem, and then Tanzania, which offers notable support measures aimed at reaching some of the most vulnerable populations.

RWANDA

Rwanda arguably has the most well-documented legal digitalisation strategy in Africa. The country has made digital transformation a cornerstone of its national development strategy, with e-justice as a flagship initiative to rebuild and modernize the judicial sector. Innovations in e-Governance have been credited with improving accountability, transparency, efficiency and convenience in transacting with citizens and businesses and with reducing incidences of corruption.

Digitalisation has been accompanied by a decentralisation strategy, where all thirty districts in the country have a *Maison pour Accès de la Justice* (MAJ). These 'justice houses' have lawyers and legal aid providers that help people access legal services, although their support is mostly in-person legal aid. This is complemented by the Abunzi system, local courts made up of elected community members who are trained to resolve minor disputes and conflicts.

At the same time, several challenges remain in the implementation of e-justice in Rwanda. The roll-out of e-justice has been hampered by capacity gaps at the government level (both national and local). This entails both a lack of digital literacy and technical capacity of government staff and a lack of adequate infrastructure. Additional challenges stem from limited digital infrastructure in remote areas.

One of the main challenges relates to the digital divide. Particularly in rural areas, few people use smartphones to access the internet, and rely instead on ordinary phones. Limited digital literacy further hinders the use of the system, an issue the government is seeking to address through digital literacy courses.³ Country-wide mobile phone penetration is around 80%, but smartphone ownership sits at only 15%. Women and rural populations are much less likely to own a cell phone or have access to the internet. Moreover, women, the elderly, and persons with disabilities are much less likely to be digitally literate.

Rwanda's digitalisation efforts essentially comprise three components: legal information, government services, and court services.

Online Legal Information

Amategeko is the official online portal for Rwandan laws and case law, launched in November 2022. It provides free online access to legal information, including legislation, case law, and legal reports. The website is available in three languages: English, French, and Kinyarwanda. The portal's development reportedly cost up to one million USD, with updates scheduled to occur every three months.

Aside from Amategeko, the Legal Aid Forum (LAF) of Rwanda operates 845, an interactive platform that provides access to legal information and advice through IVR (Interactive Voice Response) and USSD (unstructured supplementary service data).⁴ Users can dial Viamo's toll-free 8-4-5 service to receive legal information on a wide range of topics through recorded voice messages and text-based information, with the opportunity to receive additional advice through call-centre operators and LAF's legal aid network. Offering both information and access to services allows individuals to take effective steps toward resolving their legal issues, moving beyond simply receiving information. The platform was specifically developed to give vulnerable populations better access to free legal information and advice.⁵

³ There is a national model called Digital Ambassadors Program (DAP), which deploys trained 'digital ambassadors', mostly young people, to teach people about basic computer and smartphone use, online safety, digital payments, and accessing online public services. Training is given in local languages in public spaces, such as schools, administrative offices, or community centres. Digital literacy is also explicitly integrated in the school curriculum.

⁴ USSD is also frequently used for innovations that allow people to anonymously report issues such as crime, corruption, police misconduct or gender-based violence.

⁵ A similar initiative has been undertaken by BarefootLaw in Uganda, a nonprofit organisation that uses digital technology and a community-based approach to provide free legal information and services to people, particularly in rural areas. They use SMS, social media, radio, and toll-free numbers to share legal knowledge, train local community leaders to connect people to services, and have established solar-powered mobile 'justice boxes' (recycled shipping containers with computers and internet access that can be installed in rural areas and connect people to legal aid providers and lawyers in Kampala).

Online Government Services

IremboGOV⁶ is Rwanda's digital government services platform, which was launched in 2015 and has been repeatedly upgraded and expanded. It is essentially a one-stop-shop platform that allows people to apply for government services online, obtaining birth or marriage certificates, licenses and permits, land registries, scheduling healthcare appointments. The platform is designed to digitise essential government services, eliminating the need for paper documentation and physical travel. Aside from the website, the platform is accessible through USSD⁷ and a network of agents so as to enable access for people without internet access, particularly in rural areas.

IremboGOV is the product of a public-private-partnership (PPP) between the Rwandan government, a Rwandan software company (Irembo, formerly RwandaOnline Platform Ltd), and a Singaporean e-government business (CrimsonLogic), with the latter only being involved in the initial stages. Irembo (the company) has a 25-year agreement with the government to digitise and maintain public services under a Build-Operate-Transfer (BOT) model. Users can register for the platform with their national ID and phone number, and payments can be settled with credit card or mobile payment, with the company charging a commission on every payment.

A few of the key principles of Irembo are to prioritise the citizen and make services as simple as possible, reducing the number of steps required to access a service. IremboGOV has significantly reduced costs and time for users, while also greatly improving the productivity of government officers, who processed more than three times as many applications in 2024 compared to 2020. It has been claimed that over 100 million hours of both government officers and Rwandan people have been saved since the introduction of the platform. The system is mostly positively evaluated by users and recently won a United Nations award for digital inclusivity.

Digital Judicial Platform

The Integrated Electronic Case Management System (IECMS) is a system that has unified and digitised the operations of all key institutions in the Justice, Reconciliation, and Law and Order sector: the Judiciary, Ministry of Justice, National Public Prosecution Authority (NPPA), Rwanda Investigation Bureau (RIB), the Rwanda Correctional Services (RCS), the Civil Litigation Service (CLS), the Rwanda Bar Association (RBA), and the Professional Bailiffs Association (PBA). The system was developed with the intention of both reducing delays and costs.

The IECMS allows all justice institutions easy and secure access to individual cases for their ongoing management. It automates judicial processes and provides each institution with a customized interface. It was implemented in response to a set of familiar challenges faced by the Rwandan Justice Sector, including long delays and growing backlogs, (perceived)

⁶ Irembo is the Kinyarwanda word for 'gateway' or 'door'.

⁷ USSD is a communication protocol that allows mobile phones to interact directly with service providers using simple codes, such as dialing.

subjectivity and corruption, and a lack of trust and confidence in the justice system. At the time, the system was entirely paper based. The IECMS systems digitalises the case cycle from filing to hearing and judgement. It also gives citizens the ability to track their cases at every stage of the judicial process and sends out notifications for important events like deadlines and hearings.

The system was developed by an American company (Synergy International Systems, which later also designed the IECMS for Zimbabwe) and began operating in 2016. Rwandan judicial staff was closely involved in the development to ensure the system would be relevant for its intended users. Implementation followed a strategic and phased approach, starting with the city of Kigali and commercial courts and then expanding to all courts nationwide a year later. The system underwent an update in 2024, introducing new features such as the integration of an e-court system that enables video conferencing.

The IECMS system has been credited with faster case processing and reduced backlog. Litigants benefit from the convenience of filing and managing cases remotely, at any time, eliminating the requirement for a physical court visit. In one study of a rural district of Rwanda, people cited faster processing times, reduced costs, and better access to case-related information and updates as the main benefits of the system. Some respondents also highlighted increased transparency and reduced chances of corruption. However, respondents also mentioned various challenges in relation to the IECMS, including illiteracy and lack of training, combined with a lack of support centres in the immediate vicinity. As people often depend on agents to access the online portals, they still need to travel in order to get access to justice. The system was perceived by some respondents as difficult to navigate and was not consistently available in their preferred language.

The most distinctive feature of the IECMS is its 'integrated sector-wide approach'. Instead of creating isolated systems for each institution, the IECMS was designed to integrate five key justice sector entities into a single system. This integration enables real-time data sharing and a continuous workflow, from initial investigation to sentence execution, eliminating delays and duplicated efforts from manual document transmission. This has been credited as one of the main reasons why the system has been generally considered a success.

Both IremboGOV and the IECMS are the result of a PPP, which has been cited as an important reason for their success, especially in combination with strong institutional coordination and consultation of relevant stakeholders. Rwanda's implementation of e-justice is also driven in a very top-down manner by the government. This strong government ownership and a comprehensive development approach have allowed the IECMS system to be integrated across the justice sector in a holistic manner. Consequently, more decentralized countries may find it challenging to replicate Rwanda's digitalisation strategy.

Support Measures

The launch of the IECMS system was accompanied by an awareness raising campaign, promoting the system through television and radio as well as through local internet cafes and trained facilitators. A study in one rural district showed that most people who were aware of the IECMS heard about it through the media, a government agency, or a community leader. Roll-out was further accompanied by a training programme of government staff who would be using the system, following a train-the-trainer model. This approach of awareness raising and capacity building has been instrumental in ensuring uptake of the system by both legal professionals and citizens alike.

To bridge the digital divide, Rwanda has adopted two strategies. First, the Irembo platform is also accessible through USSD for people without a smartphone. Second, the country has set up a widespread network of agents that help people submit applications to Irembo. This network of agents was crucial for familiarising people with the platform, particularly when internet penetration was still low in the early days of its operation. In this regard, more than 80% of transactions were initially carried out through agents, a proportion that has gradually fallen to less than 50% in 2021, reflecting the growing empowerment of users and improved access to digital technologies.

The countrywide number of agents has grown from around 2.000 to 7.700. These agents can typically be found at local government offices or cyber cafes. The Irembo website has a list of services provided by agents, while the Judiciary publishes a list of trained and certified agents, including their contact details and location. The Irembo Agent Support Center can also help people locate agents in their vicinity. Users bring their details and documents to an agent, who helps them login, complete the application, and facilitate payment. Agents can also follow-up with users when results are available.

Irembo agents are not necessarily government employees. Instead, they are appointed by private companies and charge a small fee for successful applications. Following reports of agents overcharging clients, a tariff plan called Ntuyarenze⁸ was introduced and published, outlining standardised service fees and associated costs, such as printing or scanning and commissions. Irembo also pays agents a fee on behalf of the user to ensure affordability. To further improve the services delivered by these agents, nationwide training and certification programmes have been launched, with certified agents wearing special jackets and badges as a sign of reliability and trust. In May 2023 Rwanda also launched the Byikorere⁹ campaign, which aims to enhance peoples' skills and confidence to use technology to request government services through training and assistance from agents.

Agents can also help people file cases via IECMS, although this is more limited and comes with some challenges. Many of the agents are not necessarily equipped in understanding the system or familiar with legal terminology and tools. There are also some concerns around privacy and confidentiality and limitations to what agents as non-legal professionals can do.

⁸ Ntuyarenze is the Kinyarwanda word for 'you are welcome' or 'you are not alone'.

⁹ Byikorere is the Kinyarwanda word for 'do it yourself'.

In recent years, efforts have been made to provide Irembo agents with training in how to use the IECMS. One such training was conducted by the Legal Aid Forum (LAF) at the Institute of Legal Practice and Development (ILPD), supported by USAID and the government of Rwanda.



TANZANIA

E-justice in Tanzania is not as advanced as in Rwanda, but the country constitutes an interesting case study for some of the major challenges related to implementing e-justice initiatives and support measures used to reach the most vulnerable parts of the population.

Tanzania's digitalisation efforts started with the Commercial Division of the National Judiciary in 2007, followed by the Court of Appeal in 2013. Following a pilot in 2016, the Judiciary adopted a set of rules in 2018 that mandated all court documents to be filed digitally in order to increase access and transparency and reduce delays.

Online Legal Information

Tanzania has worked towards digitalising legal texts in partnership with Laws.Africa and AfricanLII. The country's legal information platform, TanzLII, offers Pocket Law, an offline application containing legislation, case law, and other legal materials. Users can download and install it on Windows or Mac computers, and it is available without an internet connection.

Digital Judicial Platform

In more recent years the Judiciary of Tanzania has invested heavily in the adoption and implementation of e-justice. As in Rwanda, the Judiciary implemented an Electronic Case Management System in 2023 (JoT-eCMS). The implementation of the system was accompanied by a training for appellate judges on how to use the system. This fits within the country's broader Digital Economy Strategic Framework and e-government initiatives that provide institutional support and funding priorities for digital public services, including justice.

Given the recent implementation of the JoT-eCMS, little research is available to assess the effectiveness of the system. On the other hand, various studies have looked into the implementation and adoption of digital records by the Judiciary of Tanzania, including e-filing. Different studies published over the years all conclude that most records are still managed manually, although digitalisation does seem to have increased in recent years. These studies find that some of the main challenges encountered in the implementation of a digital record system within the justice sector in Tanzania is the lack of skills, knowledge, and willingness to adopt new technologies among relevant staff members (stemming from a lack of training), inadequate infrastructure (including slow internet and power cuts), and ineffective implementation strategies. One study in a district court of a rural area found that from a user perspective, although e-filing of cases was perceived as easier and more straightforward than the traditional approach, many people needed assistance from lawyers or other legal officers to submit a filing, an assistance that was not always available.

Despite the challenges related to the adoption of e-justice, court staff members are overwhelmingly positive about the (potential) role of digital court records in the delivery of justice services. They almost universally agreed that digitalisation contributes to reductions in time and costs and increased accountability and transparency, overall contributing to significant improvements in making justice accessible to the people. The 2024 study concluded that, despite challenges like the ones mentioned above, “the digital transformation of high courts in Tanzania through the IECMS makes justice delivery more convenient, transparent, and cost-effective.”

Support Measures

Digitalisation of the Judiciary is part of a broader set of goals that fall within the so-called Citizen-Centric Judicial Modernization and Justice Service Delivery Project (CCJMP), largely funded by the World Bank. Besides digitalisation efforts, this strategy includes investments in accompanying measures, such as Integrated Justice Centres (ICJs), Mobile Courts, and telecentres.

Integrated Justice Centres

The ICJs are one-stop centres that house multiple courts and related services, such as legal aid providers, social welfare officers, police gender desks, and religious leaders. The centres also have dedicated childcare rooms to improve access to justice for women. They focus primarily on family, business, land, and labour disputes.

Mobile Courts

The mobile courts, also referred to as justice-on-wheels, are intended to make access to justice easier and faster for people in remote and rural areas, particularly vulnerable groups such as women, people in situations of poverty, and people with disabilities. They operate on a scheduled circuit, are tech-equipped, and focus primarily on mediation/ADR and small claims. A mobile court also operates in Nyarugusu refugee camp, with dedicated expertise in domestic violence cases.

The mobile courts offer a range of services, including:

- Receive, register, hear, and adjudicate first-instance or small-claim disputes;
- Provide immediate relief to victims of domestic violence through the issuance of protective orders;
- Administer oaths on affidavits and certification of documents;
- Give reports on cases and court schedules;
- Provide legal aid and justice information;
- Issue and print court documents;
- Offer training and outreach to justice sector stakeholders and the general public;
- Offer space to hold remote hearings for higher courts;
- Offer special services to handicapped persons who cannot travel long distances to courts.

To ensure the mobile courts are not compromised by a lack of electricity or power outages, they are outfitted with solar energy panels. They are equipped with computers and the necessary information and communication technologies (ICT) including scanners, photocopy machines, etc., and function essentially as local, self-contained courtrooms. In case there is no local internet access, case data can be stored and managed locally and uploaded once the unit reaches an area with stable internet. The mobile courts have contributed to reduced case backlogs and faster resolutions, strengthening public confidence in the justice system.

Telecentres

Finally, a noteworthy aspect of Tanzania's approach to the digitalisation of government services is the role of telecentres, particularly in rural areas.¹⁰ Telecentres¹¹ are public or community-based ICT access points that provide computers, internet connectivity, printing, scanning, and e-government services to rural or underserved communities. A longitudinal study published in 2018 explored in depth the use of these telecentres for accessing e-government services. Although it did not specifically address the issue of e-justice, the findings help understand how telecentres can play a crucial role in bridging the digital divide.

Tanzania has a variety of telecentres that can be used by people without smartphones or home internet. These operate either as non-profit organisations, funded by the government or international donors, or as small businesses run by local entrepreneurs, with the former fitting in with the government's objectives of establishing telecentres in rural areas across the country. Examples include telecentres developed under UNESCO's Community Multimedia Centre (CMC) project. CMCs are designed to combine traditional media (especially community radio) with access to internet services in the most underserved areas of a country. They are designed and operated by the community to ensure they respond to local needs and foster a sense of ownership.¹² For example, the Sengerena Telecentre in the Mwanza region combines a community radio station with a computer centre, library, and conference room with video equipment. It relies on both paid staff and volunteers, and receives assistance from local NGOs. The involvement of women's groups has been cited as an important reason for the success of the centre.

Despite the high ambitions, it seems that in many cases the actual use of e-government services at telecentres remains limited and many projects have faced difficulties sustaining momentum beyond the initial successful launch or pilot phase. The main reasons cited for this are a lack of infrastructure (such as computers and stable internet connections), a lack of management (donors withdraw or staff quits), and limited awareness and knowledge among

¹⁰ Various other countries in East Africa also have a long history of using e-kiosks to increase internet access in rural areas. These are mobile kiosks powered by solar energy and operating with satellite connectivity, containing computers that people can use for a small fee. In the United States legal kiosks are free-to-access computers in community centres and other public buildings, offering access to legal aid to low income individuals who do not have a computer or internet access at home.

¹¹ Telecentres are also referred to as information kiosks, telecentres, cyber cafes, public internet access points (PIAPs) and community technology learning centres.

¹² It should be noted that an earlier attempt to establish such a CMC in Dassasgo, Burkina Faso was unsuccessful, with the centre ceasing operations after a sudden increase in the costs of internet set by the government.

potential users. To remedy the latter, the study suggests that “integrated solutions, based on the interaction between Internet and ICT, mobile phones, and radio are becoming increasingly important for bridging the digital divide.” The authors further argue that such an integrated approach should combine the possibility of carrying out simple functions through mobile phones (which are becoming increasingly commonplace even in rural areas) with the opportunity to do more complex tasks at telecentres, where possible with assistance from experienced agents. Considering the significant role telecentres can play in supporting communities, they ought to be recognised as essential infrastructure and consequently receive appropriate financial support.



West Africa

Desk research suggests there are fewer digitalisation initiatives within the justice systems of West African countries as compared to their counterparts in East Africa. Various countries have started digitalisation efforts in recent years, but these are more recent and therefore there are fewer resources available that analyse these efforts and provide best practices and lessons learned. Nonetheless, various countries have made important efforts in recent years that can provide insights into what might work and what not.

As shown above, according to the United Nations both Ghana Côte d'Ivoire have a high EGDI score, while Senegal is recognised for its relatively high score compared to its development level. Benin presents a compelling case study because of substantial recent developments and innovative support initiatives.

GHANA

Ghana is one of the leading countries in West Africa when it comes to digitalisation of justice. A 2019 study highlighted the potential of integrating ICT into the delivery of justice to unblock the system, reduce bribery and corruption, and cut down costs and geographical barriers by replacing physical presentation with electronic options, but highlights the risk of excluding less privileged segments of society even more because of the digital divide.

The Ghana Legal Information Institute (GhaLII) is a non-profit organisation based in Accra that collaborates with the Judiciary to publish legislation, case law, and other relevant legal material online. However, the organisation struggles to consistently publish all material and uploading material often requires a complicated process of multiple payments for hard copies, transport, and scanning. User numbers of the website remain low even ten years after its launch, as intended users are either not aware of its existence or show continued preference for hard copies.

The National Action Plan for Improving Justice Delivery (2020 – 2028) includes explicit goals related to using ICT tools to improve efficiency and responsiveness of court services, digital publication of legal information (including legal texts and court decisions), provision of online access to court documents and case updates, and integration of digital technologies into court infrastructure and operations.

The country launched its e-Justice platform in March 2019, supported by the World Bank's e-Transform Project. The platform aims to automate manual filing systems, thereby enhancing the efficiency of court operations. The system facilitates digital case filing, automated case tracking, electronic judgment pronouncement, and streamlined management of court proceedings. Initially implemented in 51 High Courts in Accra, the system has expanded to other regions, with plans for nationwide integration.

In early 2025 it was announced that the Supreme Court and the Court of Appeal of Ghana would convert to a fully paperless system through a new Electronic Case Management System (ECMS) implemented in cooperation with Synergy International Systems (the same company that was used in Rwanda). A number of locations also have digital courtrooms and virtual hearing facilities, intended to expand timely access to justice in more remote areas, reducing travel burdens and increasing social inclusion. Strong institutional ownership and leadership by the Judiciary has been cited as providing an important foundation for longer-term continuous impact.

The ECMS requires registration and authentication based on personal information, effectively restricting access to legal professionals, such as judges, court staff, and lawyers. User friendliness is reported to be quite challenging, especially for people without knowledge of legal terminology and/or digital literacy. Additionally, the lack of significant outreach and awareness campaigns has resulted in low public awareness, extending beyond legal professionals.

Digitalisation has largely been concentrated in higher courts and selected pilot courts, primarily in more urban areas. Challenges related to consistent power supply and IT infrastructure development mean that many lower courts in more remote areas have not been able to digitalise their operations.

Stakeholders in Ghana acknowledge the positive effects of digitalisation efforts, including faster access to rulings, improved case monitoring, efficiency gains, public visibility and legal empowerment. They are particularly positive about the introduction of virtual courts improving access to justice in remote areas. These virtual courts can be particularly useful during high-profile cases, which in some instances have been livestreamed to generate public awareness and ensure transparency. A recent study on virtual court sessions emphasised the potential benefits of virtual court systems, but raised concerns about data protection, privacy issues, and due process, stressing the need to adhere to existing legal frameworks.

Some of the primary challenges are access disparities related to registration barriers, lack of awareness and digital literacy, and language barriers. Additional challenges relate to infrastructural deficiencies, particularly in rural and remote areas, and the dependency on donor funding is a risk for long-term sustainability. There is also some resistance among some of the court staff, in particular personnel that feels their jobs are potentially threatened.

Support measures

Digitalisation efforts have been combined with investments in physical infrastructure, in particular a set of multi-level court complexes that house various court levels in one building. This makes it easier to roll out the necessary infrastructure for digitalisation efforts. However, these centres have so far been primarily constructed in major urban areas.

The ECMS platform is accompanied by detailed user manuals and guides as well as an FAQ section on the website of the Judiciary and on the online portal. A number of training sessions have been conducted for both lawyers and judges, although this remains limited to certain geographical areas.



CÔTE D'IVOIRE

Côte d'Ivoire piloted a national e-Justice platform in early 2025, focusing on the provision of legal documents. Citizens can use the platform for online requests and delivery of judicial acts, such as birth certificates. They can submit requests, track status, and retrieve certified electronic documents. The platform is connected to the Registre National des Personnes Physiques (RNPP), which makes it possible to verify requests using biometric data.

Previously, people had to physically go to a court and fill out a paper form, and the certificate was then processed and issued manually. After initial pilot runs in two jurisdictions, the platform was expanded to ten new jurisdictions in June 2025. It has been reported that within four days of launching the pilot, around 800 applications for birth certificates were requested through the system. Implementation of the system required substantial training of officials within the Ministry of Justice. Concurrently, a joint programme by UNDP, UNICEF, and UNODC running from June 2024 – June 2025 was launched to conduct a gap analysis and digital readiness assessment, as well as a national e-Justice roadmap.

Côte d'Ivoire has also made progress toward providing digital access to legal texts and court decisions, but the system is heavily fragmented and there is no single nationwide, formally mandated platform that aggregates all legal texts and judgments in an accessible and up-to-date way. Certain court decisions and legal texts are digitised and published, though often in an ad hoc manner, only for higher courts, or via individual court websites or government portals.



SENEGAL

Similarly to Côte d'Ivoire, Senegal is in the early stages of digitalising its justice system, adopting a four-year Judiciary digitalisation masterplan in 2023. The country has a wide range of different online platforms that publish legal texts and court rulings, but because of this fragmentation and the irregularity in publishing, legal professionals make limited use of them.

In July 2025, an e-justice pilot project was launched with a mini data center and microwave antenna linking the Pikine-Guédiawaye courthouse (located in a suburb of Dakar) to Dakar. This initiative aimed to streamline judicial services and improve public access to legal processes. By linking the two courts electronically, citizens can now request judicial documents, track cases, and ultimately pay fees electronically. The pilot project combines investment in hardware and software with training of staff in the Pikine-Guédiawaye court and training and public outreach to citizens, especially women and youth. The goal is to extend this initiative across all thirteen regions of Senegal to significantly reduce court congestion and processing times.



BENIN

Finally, Benin launched an active, government-led e-justice programme in 2022 that aimed to digitalise all steps of the court procedure. Online information regarding the programme's implementation is scarce. In 2025, the country launched an application (justice.bj) to facilitate access to legal services and simplify administrative procedures. The application aims to make legal language more accessible to everyday people, by including a database with all the legal codes, a directory of courts, as well as practical information on legal procedures and explanatory articles. It also allows users to verify the authenticity of administrative documents using a QR code system.

A compelling study published in 2025 argues that the most effective way to improve access to justice in Benin would be a two-pronged approach of focusing on Alternative Dispute Resolutions (ADR) and investing in digitalisation efforts. The study suggests formally institutionalising ADR within the country's legal framework while investing in the digitalisation of ADR procedures, such as online dispute resolution mechanisms. This requires investments in both equipment and people (particularly in mediators and other ADR providers). The study emphasises the importance of learning from other countries' experiences while also ensuring that implemented solutions are sensitive to the particular cultural and social context of Benin.

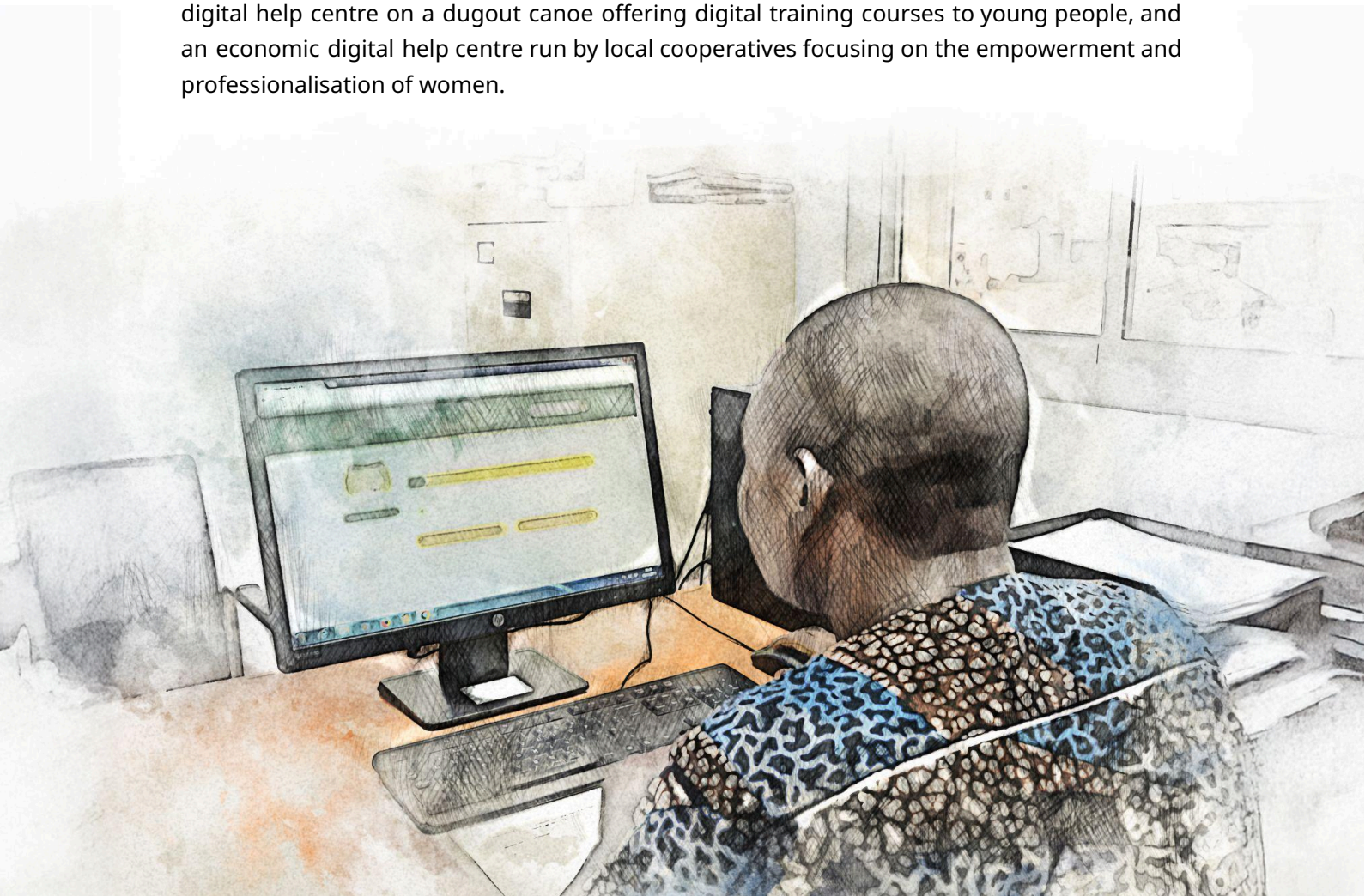
Another study published in 2022 looked at challenges and opportunities related to the digitalisation of public services in Benin. Although taking a broader approach and not specifically focusing on the digitalisation of justice, it provides some interesting insights on the digital divide and potential solutions. The report notes that many public services have been made available online and many people are aware of these services (76%) and have used them at least once (67%). However, women, rural populations, and those without any level of education are significantly less likely to make use of these digital services. Persistent challenges include infrastructure gaps (electricity, internet), low digital literacy, cost of devices, lack of trust, and weak communication on service procedures. Institutional overlaps and concerns about data protection also slow down the progress. The study recommends the investment and expansion of digital infrastructure, along with widespread communication about these services in different local languages to raise awareness, specifically focusing on women and rural populations. As specific vulnerable groups are likely to rely on intermediaries to use the digital public services, the report further recommends the government expand the Points Numériques Communautaires or "Digital Community Hubs" (PNC) in the country to include the provision of assistance to citizens seeking to make use of digital services.

Support Measures

As part of the government's digitalisation strategy, PNCs have been set up in 43 communes, or "districts", with the ambition to have one set up in all 77 communes. PNCs are centres equipped with power generators, good internet connection and computers, aiming to bring connectivity to underserved areas. They provide affordable or even free internet access, offer digital skills training, and serve as access points for digital government services, offering support where needed.

The centres are developed under a public-private partnership model, where part of the development is done by private companies (for example, internet service provider Jeny SAS is involved, as is the Chinese company Huawei, which provides equipment). They can be set up in community spaces, such as municipal buildings or schools, or as independent cyber cafes, and are powered with solar electricity panels, although these are reported to sometimes break down. Besides PNCs, the government has also launched digital boxes powered by satellite connectivity to areas that do not yet have a fiber connection.

A parallel development project further tries to bridge the digital divide in the most vulnerable communities. This project develops three types of digital help centres targeting the lakeside commune of Sô-Ava and several villages in the Atlantic department. These include rural digital help centres via local kiosks focused on everyday use and online services, a mobile digital help centre on a dugout canoe offering digital training courses to young people, and an economic digital help centre run by local cooperatives focusing on the empowerment and professionalisation of women.



Conclusions

The report examines various case studies on e-justice and related support measures, highlighting both best practices and operational challenges. Effective e-justice initiatives often involve providing online legal information and advice, as well as adopting a comprehensive digitalisation strategy for the judiciary. This strategy may also include incorporating options for virtual hearings. Common support measures include setting up physical access points or agent networks, including non-tech solutions, investing in digital skills training, and conducting awareness and outreach campaigns.

The challenges to e-justice are twofold, stemming from both the providers of the system and the users interacting with it. On the provider side, some of the main challenges are related to a lack of infrastructure (electricity, software, hardware), funding sustainability, gaps in skills and capacity within the justice sector, and institutional resistance. On the user side, the main challenges also stem from a lack of infrastructure (no smartphones or internet access), limited digital literacy skills, and a lack of awareness and trust.

Recommendations

Based on the best practices and challenges, a set of recommendations can be offered to ensure the implementation of e-justice in Burkina Faso can reach its full potential.

1. Adopt a people-centred approach

The single most important thing when implementing e-justice is to focus on people rather than merely digitalising existing bureaucratic processes. The design of any e-justice system or tool ought to be people-centred, focusing on achieving better outcomes for more justice users (such as cheaper, faster procedures) rather than merely digitalising existing bureaucratic processes. A critical focus is the perceived usefulness of the system or tool and the perceived ease of use. A key measure of success can be the system's effectiveness in helping more individuals resolve their legal issues more quickly and satisfactorily. This will require a focus on vulnerable communities and on bridging the digital divide.

2. Ensure long-term viability of e-justice initiatives through a sustainable financing model

Best practices: Benin (PPP for PNCs) / Rwanda (PPP and BOT models, agent network)

To secure the future and long-term viability of e-justice initiatives, it is crucial to have a sustainable financing model and limit dependency on external funding. This can be done by ensuring long-term government commitment and/or implementing a revenue-generating model. Public-Private Partnerships, Build-Operate-Transfer models, and trained agents that charge a small service fee are some of the promising practices that can help guarantee an initiative's long-term financial sustainability.

3. Combine strong government ownership with public-private partnerships and engagement with all key stakeholders

Best practices: Ghana (strong judicial leadership) / Rwanda (centralised leadership and broad consultations)

The more successful e-justice initiatives seem to benefit from the government taking a strong leadership role and maintaining ownership over the system, allowing for holistic integration across the justice sector. However, it is equally critical to involve local stakeholders, including community leaders, justice providers, and potential justice users to ensure acceptance and adoption of the system. Seeking their continuous input and feedback helps ensure the system is adapted to the socio-cultural realities of local communities and meets the needs of the people.

4. Invest in adequate infrastructure

It is critical to invest in and expand reliable ICT infrastructure (such as computers and stable internet connections) in both urban and rural areas to support digital services. This investment should include ensuring a consistent power supply (e.g., using solar energy panels) and budgeting adequately for the adoption and use of ICT. This can also mean investing in physical access points.

5. Combine digitalisation efforts with physical access points to help bridge the digital divide

Best practices: Benin (PNCs and mobile digital help centres) / Tanzania (telecentres and integrated justice centres)

To prevent the exacerbation of inequalities, digitalisation efforts must be accompanied with the establishment of physical support centres. These centres should be equipped to provide affordable internet access and in-person assistance to citizens using digital services. Physical access points can take the form of one-stop shops that help people access (digital) government and justice services and can be established in community centres, government offices, or other places that are easily accessible and recognisable. Certain countries cooperate with universities, legal aid organisations, and civil society for this type of assistance.¹³ If local demand is insufficient to sustain such access centres by themselves, external funding might be required to operate. Alternatively, networks of agents can be deployed to provide help to people accessing digital public services. Such intermediaries can offer assisted e-filing, use digital tools, and ensure reliable and local information, but must be trained and certified.

¹³ In Burkina Faso, a 'connectivity centre' was created by UNHCR, which might provide insights.

6. Provide non-technological or offline solutions and ensure local language compatibility

Best practices: Rwanda (USSD and IVR systems) / Tanzania (pocket law application available offline, offline mobile courts operation)

Considering smartphone ownership and internet access remain low, particularly in rural areas, solutions must cater to lower-tech environments. To ensure service accessibility, especially for areas with limited connectivity, one approach is to make services available via USSD for users with basic phones. Additionally, developing offline applications or digital boxes can provide access to services even without a continuous internet connection. To guarantee inclusion and adoption, particularly for the most vulnerable populations, e-justice platforms must offer inclusive interfaces and multilingual tools. Local language support is crucial to ensure everyone can make use of new tools, particularly those in rural areas or with lower levels of education.

7. Invest in training of legal professionals and staff members

Best practices: Ghana (training for lawyers and judges) / Rwanda (train-the-trainer model) / Tanzania (training for judicial staff)

Successful implementation requires dedicated training programs for justice sector staff that operate the systems, as well as a train-the-trainer model where possible. This capacity building for government staff is essential to ensure effective usage and reduce the risk of capacity gaps hampering the rollout of e-justice. These initiatives can also help address or overcome institutional resistance.

8. Provide digital skills training to the population

Best practices: Benin (PNCs and mobile digital help centres) / Rwanda (widespread training)

A key part of bridging the digital divide is to provide digital literacy and skills training for potential end-users and the agents who assist them. These programs should focus specifically on vulnerable groups like women and rural populations, to enhance their confidence and ability to use technology to request government services.

9. Promote public awareness of innovations

Best practices: Rwanda (awareness campaigns through radio, television, community leaders) / Senegal (targeted outreach to women and youth)

E-justice initiatives need to be accompanied by a robust, widespread awareness-raising campaign to ensure that citizens know the services exist and understand their value. Campaigns should utilise a combination of traditional and digital communication channels (e.g., television, radio, poster, community gatherings) and involve local stakeholders like community leaders. These campaigns are essential for demonstrating the utility and simplicity of the new systems, thereby encouraging their use, while also limiting the factors that currently prevent adoption.

10. Ensure data security, privacy, and transparency

Systems must incorporate robust measures for cyber security and data protection to build trust among users. This includes adhering to due process and ensuring legal compliance, while also maximizing transparency through features like case tracking and public visibility of legal proceedings.

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MAIN AUTHOR:

Dr. Jelmer Brouwer - Research Consultant

WITH THE COLLABORATION OF:

Salimata Bah - Project Officer Guidelines and Dissemination - Burkina Faso

Emilie Dajer - Senior Justice Sector Advisor - Sahel

Marie Duprez Compaoré - Senior Program Manager - Sahel

Abdel Ouedraogo - Project Officer - Burkina Faso

Cedric Tapsoba - Country Manager - Burkina Faso

DESIGN:

Paulina Siwicka - Visual Communications Designer

Illustrations are provided for exemplary purposes and do not necessarily reflect the geographical contexts studied.

The Hague Institute
for Innovation of Law
+31 70 762 0700
info@hiil.org
www.hiil.org



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