



THE JUDICIARY

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE PERFORMANCE OF **THE SUPREME COURT** FOR THE YEAR 2025

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JUSTICES OF THE COURT DURING 2025



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- 10 active Justices in the year 2025, Headed by the Hon. The Chief Justice Alfonse Chigamoy Owiny – Dollo
- Chief Justice Owiny – Dollo retired from service on 18th January 2026.



JUSTICES OF THE COURT DURING 2025



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- The Court warmly welcomed Hon. Justice Dr. Flavian Zeija - the new Chief Justice of Uganda – as Head of the Court.
- We thank God for his timely arrival, and we pledge to support him.



NATIONAL COURT CASE CENSUS, 2025



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- The Judiciary conducted a National Case Census in January 2025.
- It was reported that the Supreme Court had a total of **1,000 pending cases, 219 are Backlog**



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NATIONAL COURT CASE CENSUS, 2025

- **31 cases have been at the Court for more than 10 years**
- **Nevertheless, there was improved performance (completion of cases) in the year 2025 compared to the 4 preceding years.**



ACTION TAKEN ON CASE BACKLOG



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- The Court prioritised “older” cases especially in the criminal appeals category.
- The Registry identified the very old cases, worked together with Uganda Prisons and ODPP to ensure their timely hearing. Justices Madrama and Bamugemereire offered leadership in this task.



ACTION TAKEN ON CASE BACKLOG



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- Weed out sessions were conducted to deal with cases that were no longer viable.
- Out of the 2 weed out sessions conducted in Sept. 2025, **25 cases** were heard. **21 were completed during the sessions.**



REFLECTING ON THE COURT'S JURISDICTION



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- We are keenly aware that the SC is the highest judicial authority in Uganda's legal system.
- It is the final court of appeal and the ultimate interpreter of the constitution.



REFLECTING ON THE COURT'S JURISDICTION



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- **The consequence is that:**
 - ✓ The Court's decisions bind all other courts.
 - ✓ Its decisions should *inter alia* aim at protecting fundamental human rights, ensure that the law and that government actions align with constitutional values



RE-VISIT



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- We opine that there is need to re-visit the Jurisdiction of the Court and perhaps narrow the nature of matters that should find their way to the Court.



RE-VISIT



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- Due to the institutional position of the SC as the apex court - there may be need to slowly move away from incremental development of the law based on the resolution of individual cases - towards the elaboration of general principles that can unify large areas of the law and provide meaningful guidance to the courts below and to the legal community.



A CALL



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- Perhaps, the Court should only handle **matters of law certified as of great public or general importance** – as is the case with matters which originate from decisions of Magistrates.
- The jury is still out



A CALL



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- But - we have sister jurisdictions which we can borrow a leaf from such as – The UK; Kenya – where the apex court only handles matters of law which are of great public interest



NEW STRATEGIES



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- The Justices prepared a *Protocol on Judgment Writing, 2025* which was adopted to guide the collegial judgement writing process.
- To enhance efficiency, the Justices recommended several amendments to the *Supreme Court Rules*
- The draft was submitted to the Law Reform Committee for further consultations.



USE OF VIRTUAL SYSTEMS



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- Litigants who are outside jurisdiction, far away from the Court and Appellants who are in prison, can use video conferencing facilities and virtual links to have their matters heard.
- This has promoted convenience and cut down on the cost of case processing for all the stakeholders.



USE OF VIRTUAL SYSTEMS



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- The Justices have embraced the use of video conferencing facilities to avoid adjournments in instances where a Justice is out of jurisdiction, or for some other reason cannot be physically present in court.
- Court sessions have proceeded with some of the Justices on the panel appearing virtually.



Lexis+AI TRAINING

Training on the use of Artificial intelligence (AI) in legal research and case management has started.



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The recent training focused on core practical capabilities of Lexis+ AI, including conversational legal research, AI-assisted drafting, summarisation of cases and documents, document analysis through uploads, and citation-linked responses grounded in authoritative legal content.



Lexis+AI TRAINING



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Participants physically navigated the platform to test several features such as demonstrating how legal tasks can move from manual processes to AI-supported workflows with verified sources and secure sessions.

Continuous exposure will hopefully equip the Court with practical digital skills and tools that will strengthen research efficiency and judicial productivity and the quality of decision-making etc.



TRAINING ON ELECTION PETITIONS MANAGEMENT



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- The Court received a week-long training in management of presidential election petitions in December 2025.
- The Justices, the Registrars and the Research Magistrates all benefited from the training.



TRAINING ON ELECTION PETITIONS MANAGEMENT



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- Need to learn from other jurisdictions that such training must be conducted way before elections and must not be a one off.



CHALLENGES ENCOUNTERED



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- **Coram in Constitutional matters:** The Coram of Supreme Court is 5 in Civil and Criminal Appeals and 7 in Constitutional Appeals.
- Considering that some of their Lordships participated in matters at the Court of Appeal before elevation to the SC, we can only have one Coram at a time and it is often difficult to raise Coram, especially for Constitutional Appeals.



CHALLENGES ENCOUNTERED



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- We have prepared a list of cases which necessitate appointment of Acting Justices. The head of Court will take advantage of the law which allows for the appointment of Acting Justices to deal with these cases.



ABUSE OF COURT PROCESS



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- There is a growing habit of litigants filing “further appeals” disguised as applications for Review.
- Litigants hide under the *slip rule* embodied in the Rules of the Court to bring these applications. Also under Rules 2(2) – inherent powers of the Court.



ABUSE OF COURT PROCESS



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- We have also dealt with a number of criminal appeals challenging severity of sentence - barred by section 5(2)(3) of the Judicature Act.
- The challenge is that to dismiss such matters filed in contravention of the law – we still require the sitting of a full Coram of the Court – there is need to review the law.



MEDIATION



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- During the 2025 Annual Judges Meeting, we committed to introduce mediation as a strategy for expediting case disposal at the Court.
- Since we started its implementation in May 2025, 09 cases have been registered, **06 cases have gone through the mediation process**, out of which 01 was successfully settled and 01 partially succeeded



MEDIATION



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- Nature of cases registered: 5 of the cases registered are commercial disputes; 4 involve land disputes.
- The Mediation Registry is yet to be fully operationalised



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THANK YOU SO MUCH

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