



Policy Brief

**Uptake of Technology in Ghana's Justice Delivery System:
Examining the Ghana Case Tracking System**

No. 1 / Jan 2022

USAID Justice Sector Support Activity

**#NoBarrierToJustice
#USAIDJusticeSectorSupportActivity**

Executive Summary

The justice sector in Ghana has been the subject of a plethora of reform efforts since independence in 1957. These reforms have varied in subject and in scale, but their principal focus has been consistent: to remove the roadblocks and bottlenecks to real, impartial, accessible, affordable and timely justice; ensure that the justice sector facilitates the growth of the economy; and position justice sector institutions to support constitutional democratic governance and the rule of law in Ghana and in accordance with international best practice. There is however a lot to do towards achieving an efficient, effective and timely delivery of justice in Ghana.

One recent major reform in the justice sector is the utilization of technology to effectively investigate and prosecute criminal acts through the USAID/Ghana Justice Sector Reform Case Tracking System (CTS) Activity and the USAID Justice Sector Support Activity. Both Activities sought to use the CTS to support the government of Ghana's ability to effectively investigate and prosecute criminal acts. The CTS is a novel software system which employs technology to track criminal cases among six (6) key user agencies right from the inception of a criminal case until its determination or disposition. The CTS is currently being implemented in seven regions of Ghana, namely, the Greater Accra, Ashanti, Volta, Northern, Western, Bono and the Upper East regions. The utilization of the CTS by the user agencies has, however, been very slow, ineffective and with very minimal motivation regardless of the various advocacy actions to enhance utilization of the technology. For example, out of a total of 16,255 cases reported as at September 30, 2021 to the various user agencies in forty (40) Districts of the CTS's presence, only 7,465 single cases have been created in the system from the rollout of the CTS. Some challenges which account for the low utilization of the CTS include declined usage by the user agencies, disruptions from the COVID-19 pandemic, internet connectivity challenges, capacity gaps of users partly due to staff transfers, and Ghana's slow pace towards transitioning from manual to computerized and technology-based case tracking and management.

To enhance the gains made in utilizing the CTS in justice delivery requires concerted efforts by all stakeholders, including policy-makers, civil society advocacy and the public to ensure that the CTS is effectively and efficiently utilized to improve Ghana's justice delivery. The Government should resource the Justice Sector Institutions (JSIs) by replacing and, where needed, repairing defective CTS devices, providing uninterrupted internet access for use by all the user agencies utilizing the CTS. The Government should also make the usage of the CTS mandatory among the user agencies

Introduction, Background and Context

Over a decade now, Ghana's justice delivery system has continuously witnessed considerable progress including the introduction of the e-justice system to minimizing case delays and prolonged detentions. Despite the progress made in Ghana's criminal justice space, there are still inherent systemic and operational challenges that inhibit effective and equitable justice delivery system in the country.

The justice system is undermined by weak institutional structures, under-resourced justice institutions and difficulties in access to justice. Despite the many international conventions and instruments Ghana is a signatory to, the Justice Sector Institutions (JSIs) are burdened with challenges that threaten their efficient delivery of justice, partly due to the over-reliance on manual processes of justice delivery. For instance, the African Union's report of 2020 indicates that

conditions necessary to ensure efficient and equal access to judicial systems including affordability, proximity, comprehensibility, and responsiveness, are not in place for several Ghanaians. In addition, there is limited access to legal assistance/services largely by the marginalised, poor and vulnerable. For instance, the Attorney-General's Department has very few lawyers –far below the minimum number required to function effectively [1]. In addition, the cost for accessing justice is beyond the reach of many and serves as an important impediment to accessing justice.

Until recently, very little was done in terms of using technology in criminal justice delivery. However, there is a gradual paradigm shift towards the adoption and harnessing of technology solutions in the administration of justice. This could minimize the manual process of administering justice in Ghana by users, players, agents and stakeholders in the justice delivery chain. Also, this will phase out the manual procedures hindering more streamlined process flows and its limitations to speedy delivery of justice via digital information sharing and communication on case dockets. There have been efforts by Ghana Government and Civil Society geared towards reforms interventions in the administration of justice to minimizing to the barest level, the delays in the speedy and efficient adjudication of cases, instilling public confidence in the courts and the security agencies, including access to justice sector services especially for the poor and vulnerable in society. These interventions in enhancing justice delivery are beginning to yield dividends.

One of such interventions in using technology in justice delivery in Ghana is the establishment and launch of the Ghana Case Tracking System (CTS), a software system which employs technology solutions to track criminal cases from inception until being disposed of. The CTS, which was launched in 2018 by the Vice President of Ghana, is a comprehensive integrated technology-based system that tracks criminal cases from the point of entry where a citizen is arrested to the point where a person is arraigned before court, sentenced, discharged or acquitted and discharged [2]. The CTS was designed, tested, piloted, and is currently being used by six (6) key Justice Sector Institutions (JSIs) across 7 out of the 16 regions of Ghana (i.e. Greater Accra, Ashanti, Northern, Volta, Upper East, Western and Bono Regions). The JSIs are the Police Service, Ghana Prisons Service, Economic and Organized Crime Office, Judicial Service, Legal Aid Commission and the Ministry of Justice and Attorney General's Department. The CTS is, thus, to support the Government of Ghana's ability to effectively investigate and prosecute criminal cases. It is improving Ghana's ability to track criminal cases from their introduction into the system to prosecution of those cases in court, improving information sharing and coordination among Ghana's law enforcement and judicial authorities, and increasing efficiency and effectiveness in investigating and prosecuting criminal cases.

It is expected that every criminal case reported at the various JSIs (especially at the Police Stations and EOCO as initiators) would be inputted into the CTS in enabling digital tracking of stages and status of case dockets and information sharing and communication – towards effective and efficient improvements in the processing of criminal cases. In doing so, a CTS dashboard, which is an electronic platform with institution specific interface, has been designed and available for use among the six (6) JSIs. Any input (case) into the system or transfer to other agencies can be seen instantly by other agencies and acted upon quickly without having to rely on someone manually taking it to the receiving institution. Hence, issues of dockets being lost or essential documents not being backed up, are to be a thing of the past with the full utilization of the CTS.

For the Government of Ghana to assume full responsibility for the CTS implementation and to maximize sustainability and its expansion, a Joint Task Force (JTF) has been constituted. The JTF comprises the Chief Directors of four Ministries (including the Ministry of the Interior, Ministry of Communication and Digitisation, Ministry of National Security and Ministry of Justice and Attorney General's Department) and the heads of the six key JSIs in the justice delivery sector [3]. The JTF

is to provide supervisory responsibilities over the general CTS activities of the JSIs; to recommend the expansion of CTS key justice sectors to include other justice sector agencies in the country; to approve requests to redesign, revise or make adjustment to the CTS software, and to support solicitation of equipment for CTS implementation to be cascaded into the remaining nine (9) regions of Ghana.

As it is Ghana Government`s drive to digitalize the provision of goods and services in enhancing service delivery, the uptake of technology- the CTS, in Ghana`s justice delivery system is to be recognized as a milestone in improving justice delivery. The CTS is a Ghana Government project and requires all hands on deck to ensure its successful implementation.

Description of the Problem

Despite the introduction of the CTS some four years ago, the usage of the CTS by the user agencies has been very slow, ineffective and with very minimal motivation regardless of the various advocacy actions by the USAID Justice Sector Support Activity implementers and interested parties [4][5]. For instance, available data from the monitoring of the CTS usage as at September 30, 2021, indicates that out of a total of 16,255 cases reported to the various JSIs, only 7,465 single cases have been created in the system from the rollout of the CTS to date by the initiators (Ghana Police Service and EOCO) across the seven Regions as indicated in Table 1.0.

Table 1.0: Number of cases created in the CTS across the 757 locations

Region (s)	Number Of Cases Created											
	Before 2021	Jan	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	Jun.	Jul.	Aug.	Sept.	Sub-Total	Cum. Total
Ashanti	450	4	0	4	4	44	0	0	0	1	57	507
Bono	148	1	4	4	2	2	0	0	0	0	13	161
Greater Accra	3431	7	65	55	0	2	0	3	7	1	140	3571
Northern	444	70	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	72	516
Upper East	143	0	4	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	148
Volta	2032	145	20	13	16	21	9	78	35	5	342	2374
Western	184	0	0	2	1	1	0	0	0	0	4	188
Total	6832	227	95	79	23	70	9	81	42	7	633	7465

Source: Data from the CTS Dashboard, September 30, 2021

The Western, Upper East, Bono, Ashanti, and Northern Regions created fewer than 100 cases each during the third quarter of the year 2021.

Flowing from Table 1.0, the cumulative data captured unto the CTS from the Volta region (2,374) which is commendable could be attributed to the various initiatives taken by the JSIs in that region including assigning officers who work on the CTS on a weekly basis (in the case of the Aflao Police Station, for example) and a directive by the Peki Court to all the police stations in the South Dayi district to route cases unto the CTS before they are heard at the court. Even though the Volta and Greater Accra Regions are doing well, the trend in case creation is reducing, specifically for Greater Accra.

Some challenges have been identified as informing the low utilization of the CTS. They include, but not limited to the following:

- Inadequate trained staff of the JSIs on the CTS resulting in declined usage by the user agencies partly due to transfers of staff trained to use the CTS to non-CTS locations.
- Ghana Government's/JSIs slow pace towards institutionalizing the CTS, i.e., making the utilization of the CTS by the user agencies mandatory. Once the utilization of the CTS is mandatory for the user agencies, officers will be compelled to use it rather than the current situation where one excuse after the other is provided for not entering cases into the CTS.
- Poor internet connectivity for use by the JSIs. It is instructive to note that when CTS sites were supported with internet access, cases entered increased. After all, officers could then not cite poor internet access as excuse for not entering cases into the CTS.
- Challenges associated with transitions from manual systems to computerized ones especially in a developing country like Ghana, despite the buy-in digitization culture within Ghana in embracing such systems. Many officers are used to entering cases they are handling manually. Thus, adopting the new work ethic of entering cases using ICT has been quite a challenge to many of the officers. Hence they take every little opportunity to avoid using the CTS.

Policy Recommendations

To sustain and enhance the gains made in utilizing the CTS and harnessing technology in justice service delivery require concerted efforts by policy-makers and all stakeholders to ensure that key initiatives including reforms and behavior change are undertaken. Below are some recommendations being proposed for adoption to support the utilization of the CTS among key justice sector institutions:

1. The Government (represented by its designated agencies such as the Ministry of Communication Digitization and the National Signals Bureau should commit to prioritize all the CTS sites in GovNet connectivity and bandwidth strengthening initiatives, including capacity building initiatives for e-Government under the ongoing Ghana Government e-Transformation agenda.
2. The Government (represented by the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Communication and Digitization) should resource the JSIs including replacing or repairing defective CTS devices. Also required is the provision of uninterrupted internet access for use by all the JSIs utilizing the CTS.
3. The JSIs should make the usage of the CTS mandatory.
4. To move the needle beyond the recently reviewed standard operating procedures of the various JSIs which now accommodate the CTS concept, there is the need for legislation to bind the user agencies to route all criminal cases through the CTS in ensuring efficiency and enhanced processing and adjudication of cases whilst minimizing the case delays, missing dockets and the many infractions associated with the manual processes of justice delivery.
5. The leadership of the six key JSIs should assign specific scheduled officers to work on the CTS on a daily or weekly basis. This approach is working well in the Police Station in Aflao, Volta Region, where at least a police officer is assigned on a weekly basis to enter cases unto the CTS.

6. The Heads of the Ghana Police Service that vacate their positions should endeavor to brief or include in their handing over notes to their successors on CTS implementation progress at their sites. Before a functional user is transferred especially those selected to be Trainer of Trainers (ToT), the Station officer should have supervised him/her to train extensively another user to take up the role of the ToT in his absence.
7. The Ghana Police Training Schools, the Prisons Service Training Schools, the Judicial Training Institute and all capacity enhancement institutions of the JSIs should. adopt into their training curriculum, the CTS concept and ensure that officers are offered frequent capacity building to be up to speed with the changing dynamics of using technology in justice delivery.
8. Finally, dedicated and committed officers who have undergone training on how to use the CTS should be assigned to capture data unto the CTS as part of their mandatory duties at their workstations. These officers should be motivated/incentivized to effectively carry out this mandate.

Conclusion

The introduction of the CTS in the justice delivery space in Ghana is a milestone towards enhancing justice delivery system. Even though the CTS is a novel software system in Ghana in tracking and supporting in prosecuting cases, its effective and efficient usage by the JSIs is key in ensuring that Ghana's criminal justice system is strengthened and that cases are adjudicated upon more timeously and judiciously by implementing the recommendations proffered above.

References

1. Brakopowers, A. (2018). I will not interfere in your work: A-G assures 'understaffed' EOCO, www.myJoyOnline.com. Accessed on 25th May, 2020
2. CJ Inaugurates Ghana's Case Tracking System Joint Task Force and Technical Committee, Accessed on 10th November, 2021 at: <https://judicial.gov.gh/index.php/publications/news-publications/js-latest-news/item/409-cj-inaugurates-ghana-s-case-tracking-system-joint-task-force-and-technical-committee>
3. Government launches electronic case-tracking system, accessed on 10th November, 2021 at <https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/Government-launches-electronic-case-tracking-system-654117>
4. USAID Justice Sector spearheads effective case-tracking system in Ghana, accessed on 10th November, 2021 at <https://www.gna.org.gh/1.21032052>
5. Citizen Monitoring Groups Trained On The Use Of Ghana's Case Tracking System (CTS), accessed on 8th November, 2021 at <https://lrcghana.org/citizen-monitoring-groups-trained-on-the-use-of-ghanas-case-tracking-system-cts/>



JSS Activity Team semi-annual meeting with Volta Region Community Case Tracking Group



Group photograph of JSS Activity Team with stakeholders at the Volta Region CTS Townhall Meeting



Capacity building training of officers of the Justice Sector Institutions to effectively utilize the CTS

Authors:

Daphne Lariba Nabila, Chief of Party, Enock Jengre, Rule of Law Specialist, Samuel Fant Kombian, Monitoring, Evaluation & Learning Specialist, USAID Justice Sector Support Activity

© Legal Resources Centre, Hse. No. 9, Coleman Street, Dzorwulu- Accra, Tel: +233 203 799978, +233-302-766756, E-mail: info@lrcghana.org, ejengre@lrcghana.org Website: www.lrcghana.org

USAID Justice Sector Support Activity implementers: Legal Resources Centre (lead), Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative, Crime Check Foundation and Inter-regional Bridge Group.



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE



020 379 9978
030 276 6756



CHRI
Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative

026 950 8889
030 297 1170



Crime Check Foundation

055 829 5335
030 235 0057



Inter-regional Bridge Group

020 839 8834
054 354 9190

Disclaimer

This document is made possible by the support of the American People through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The views expressed in this report do not reflect the views of USAID or the United States Government. The contents of this report are the sole responsibility of the USAID Justice Sector Support Activity team and its implementers.

#NoBarrierToJustice
#USAIDJusticeSectorSupportActivity