

DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION ROADMAP LAUNCH

A technologically advanced and inclusive Uganda



The Vice-President, Jessica Alupo (third-left), state minister for higher education Dr John Chrysostom Muyingo (second-left) and ICT and national guidance minister Christ Baryomnisi during the launch of the Uganda's Digital Transformation Roadmap in September 2023

IS UGANDA'S DIGITAL ROADMAP DELIVERING?

BY ALOYSIOUS KASOMA

Uganda's Digital Transformation Roadmap 2023/24-2027/28 is the country's big bet on growth, better services and value creation across every sector.

Launched on August 17, 2023 by the Ministry of ICT and National Guidance with the backing of United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the roadmap sets a hard target: 90% digital literacy and nationwide broadband by 2040.

Anchored in the NRM's "Securing Your Future Manifesto 2021-2026," the roadmap is the Government's scorecard for delivering on its digital promises.

Years in, the evidence is clear: real foundations for a digital economy are being laid, though gaps persist.

The roadmap is threaded through Uganda's core development blueprints. Dr Aminah Zawedde, the permanent secretary at the ICT ministry, points to its ties with the Public Finance Management Act 2015, the National Development Plan IV (NDP IV), the Tenfold Growth Strategy, the 2026/27 Budget Strategy, and Digital Uganda Vision 2040.

The Government's approach has emphasised a "whole-of-government" strategy, positioning digital technologies as enablers of socio-economic transformation. Through the Budget Framework Paper, the programme consolidates performance, priorities, and medium-term plans while ensuring that digital investments are closely tied to

national development objectives.

One of the most notable achievements so far lies in the integration of emerging technologies into key sectors of the economy. Technologies such as Artificial Intelligence, blockchain, the Internet of Things, and cloud computing are increasingly being deployed to improve efficiency, scalability, and productivity. These innovations are no longer theoretical – they are actively supporting value addition in manufacturing, agro-industrialisation, extractives, and tourism.

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In addition, digital platforms are strengthening flagship wealth creation programmes such as the Parish Development Model and Emyooga. By enhancing transparency, improving resource allocation, and enabling real-time monitoring, these platforms are helping Government ensure that public investments reach intended beneficiaries – an essential component of the "Securing Your



Dr Zawedde: ICT ministry

Future" agenda.

INFRASTRUCTURE EXPANSION

A key pillar of the roadmap – and a clear demonstration of government commitment – has been investment in digital infrastructure. Under NDP IV and the Tenfold Growth Strategy, ICT has been positioned as a central driver of economic transformation, with a focus on expanding connectivity to spur productivity and job creation.

The Government has prioritised the rollout of broadband infrastructure, particularly targeting last-mile connectivity to underserved areas. This is expected to unlock opportunities in priority sectors such as agro-industrialisation, tourism, oil and gas, and science and innovation. Plans are also underway to expand free-to-air television coverage and radio broadcasting networks, ensuring that information reaches citizens across the country.

Equally important has been the re-engineering of business processes within ministries, departments and agencies (MDAs), as well as local governments. By digitising workflows and streamlining service delivery,

the Government is reducing inefficiencies and lowering the cost of accessing public services.

A standout milestone is the establishment of Service Uganda Centres, which represent the physical interface of digital transformation. Spearheaded by the National Information Technology Authority - Uganda, these centres are being rolled out in key regions including Gulu, Mbarara, and Tororo.

Dr Hatwib Mugasa, the executive director of NITA-U, says the centres are bringing services closer to the people by providing integrated, one-stop hubs. Citizens can now access multiple government services under one roof, significantly reducing the time and cost associated with public service delivery.

DIGITAL INCLUSION

Another area where the NRM Government is making strides is in digital inclusion. Recognising that infrastructure alone is insufficient, the roadmap places strong emphasis on digital literacy and skills development.

Government initiatives are focusing on equipping citizens with the skills needed to participate in the digital economy, while also supporting local innovators to commercialise their solutions. This dual approach – building both human capital and innovation ecosystems – positions Uganda to harness the full potential of digital transformation.

Zawedde underlines this commitment, noting that digital inclusion remains a central pillar of the strategy. By investing in skilling programmes and ensuring

equitable access to digital tools, the government is working to bridge the digital divide and create opportunities for all Ugandans.

GAPS, EMERGING CHALLENGES

Despite these achievements, experts caution that significant challenges remain. Stakeholders in the ICT sector argue that while progress is evident, it is uneven and requires sustained investment to achieve the roadmap's ambitious targets.

Gideon Nkurunungi, chief executive officer of the ICT Association of Uganda, warns that insufficient funding could undermine gains made so far. The proposed reduction in the digital transformation budget – from sh388b to sh273b – raises concerns about the Government's ability to maintain momentum.

He notes that digital infrastructure has a well-documented multiplier effect on economic growth, with studies showing that a 10% increase in broadband penetration can boost GDP by up to 1.4% in developing economies. Any slowdown in investment, therefore, risks widening inequality, particularly between urban and rural areas.

Similarly, Michael Niyitegeka, the executive director of Refactory Limited, acknowledges that while there are pockets of progress – particularly in government service digitisation and skills development – the broader ICT ecosystem has yet to fully benefit. He emphasises the need for better co-ordination and alignment across the roadmap's five pillars to ensure comprehensive impact.