

## University of Nairobi unsung hero in Huduma Kenya success

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In the recent past, the Huduma Centre programme has won a number of international accolades, especially from the United Nations, for the manner it has transformed delivery of public service in Kenya, but little is known of the brains behind the concept and how it came to being.

Like Safaricom's Mpesa, which revolutionised money transfer services locally and has had a great influence internationally, the Huduma Centres concept is equally going places and will certainly sooner rather than later revolutionise how governments and other public entities, especially in Africa, deliver services to their clients. Although the Ministry of Devolution and Planning worked with the University of Nairobi's Enterprises and Services Ltd ( UNES) consultancy unit to develop and realise the idea of Huduma Centres, little is said of the UoN's role and contribution towards the formulation and implementation of the concept. Indeed, UoN is the unsung hero in the success of the Huduma Centres.

Academicians and scholars from our institutions of higher education, (public or private) should be proud that their research efforts have contributed to national development and global recognition through this transformative innovation, which is steadily influencing and helping improve our structures of governance in the delivery of public service. It indeed is a disruptive innovation. Long inured to the slow-moving, labyrinth of State bureaucracy, the people are getting used to the services of the amiable attendants at the centres. They have an unmatched customer service. It is hoped the collaboration between UoN and the Ministry of Devolution and Planning will open a new chapter of enhanced relationships between institutions of higher learning and the Government in finding solutions to national challenges and more importantly, using local resources. Early this month, Huduma Kenya won the United Nations Public Service Award ( UNPSA) for its exemplary work in serving Kenyans for improving the delivery of public services. It was the second time this year that the Huduma Centres scooped a prestigious international award.

The UNPSA rewards achievements and contributions of public service institutions towards effective and responsive public administration. See also: Huduma Centres redefine public service Certainly, and in the words of Devolution and Planning Cabinet Secretary Anne Waiguru: "...the global recognition of Huduma Centres is a confirmation that the centres are a symbol of transformational leadership in terms of service delivery to the public that has put Kenya ahead of many nations."| Clearly the success of Huduma Centres demonstrates that UoN remains one of the innovation hubs in the region and a leader in research that helps communities. It is thus important for other ministries and public entities to collaborate with UoN's consultancy unit, UNES, in seeking joint solutions to some of the challenges they could be facing so as to improve and enhance service delivery. The

University of Nairobi has historically played a crucial role in driving industry through innovation, and particularly in areas such as science and technology. Huduma Centres concept is a significant brainchild and exemplification of how institutions of higher learning can have significant impact outside the academic community. Kenya scores below par in procedures such as paying taxes, starting a business and registering property, partly due to excessive Government bureaucracy. The country fell seven positions to 129 out of 189 countries in the World Bank's Ease of Doing Business 2014 report, but thanks to Huduma Kenya, these challenges are steadily being ironed out. Huduma Centres' instant and practical applications have now eased service delivery in the day-to-day life of mwananchi.

It is driving out corruption that hobbles development. For example, the National Transport and Safety Authority is using the Huduma centres to ease the rigorous stages of applying for a provisional driving licence, book a driving test, getting a driving licence, pay fees and tracking one's application. In addition, the Office of the Attorney General as well as the Department of Justice also make use of these centres to facilitate civil marriages. The public also use the centres for business name search and registration. Through the centres, brokers who would parade around Immigration Offices on the pretext of having connections with bureaucratic officers at the Department of Immigration services to help in application for passports, visas and work permits have been minimised. The cartels have been broken and one can use an online application through the [ecitizen.go.ke](http://ecitizen.go.ke) website of the Huduma Centre's programme. President Uhuru Kenyatta termed the programme a manifestation of efficient and effective public service delivery in Africa and beyond. In a world where institutions of higher learning are merely branded as ivory towers, where students study merely for certificates, the song is different here.

As an alumni of the university, I am proud that UoN is focused on practical teaching that allows students to explore innovative ideas that can grow into big self-sustaining enterprises, besides solving other national concerns.

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