

**JULIUS MOKAYA} PUBLIC SERVICE**

# UoN unsung hero in Huduma Kenya success

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 gover-

nance 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.

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

Discovery shows that UoN remains a key innovation hub in the region and a leader in research that helps communities

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 [citizen.go.ke](http://citizen.go.ke) website of the Huduma Centres 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.

*Mr Mokaya is the Business Editor (Supplements) at The Standard [jmkokaya@standardmedia.co.ke](http://jmkokaya@standardmedia.co.ke)*

## Palaver

Just who does Mike Sonko, the Senator for Nairobi really think he is? Not content with his shenanigans in Nairobi, he has taken the tomfoolery to Watamu in the coast region where he is said to have stormed the Watamu Police Station demanding to be told why court orders are not being followed! Is he now an activist for the Judiciary or a government emissary? Someone please tell the Sonko to mind his own business!



**Roads are being annexed on security grounds and it appears nobody is bothered where hapless pedestrians end up. Parliament road, Harambee Avenue, outside Nyayo House; the list goes on. It has become fashionable in the name of security for someone to annex pedestrian walkways and cordoned them off with ropes. So, where do pedestrians end up? Walking gingerly on the road at the mercy of reckless and ruthless drivers! Doesn't anybody high up care? Isn't this illegal? Palaver asks.**

There is never a dull moment on social media (particularly Facebook), not even when our drab politics and blatant tribalistic tendencies take the back seats. People will always find something caustic to say about others. Mostly, it's never anything positive. According to one Facebooker, stupidity is struggling to own a Land Rover added to which is a Toyota Land Cruiser but still have a landlord! The 'Rover' and 'Cruiser' should automatically cancel out the 'lord!' your take?

**As news of the arrests seven FIFA officials in Zurich in a U.S. corruption probe broke, Piers Morgan, a former CNN talk show host and former editor of the UK's The Sun and the Daily Mirror and now editor at large for Mail Online wrote: You're done, Blatter: Thanks, America for finally taking down the corrupt, poisonous toad of FIFA who's been sucking the life out of football for years. Ouch!**



People hate, yes. But others take hatred a step too far. In the African traditions, no matter how bad someone was in life, they are always good in death. Speaking well of them allows them to go to heaven direct; no stop-over! In Japan, however, a 68-year-old man must have hated his wife with a vengeance for, after death and cremation, he attempted to flush the ashes down a supermarket toilet! The man says she had made him miserable in her lifetime.

[oped@standardmedia.co.ke](mailto:oped@standardmedia.co.ke)

## LEVI OBONYO}

Who would have imagined these scenes two years ago: A former American President in town visiting with local communities; followed thereafter by a US Secretary of State?

Relations between Kenya and the West, and particularly with the United States of America, have had a strong foundation from the days of the famous airlifts that saw Barack Obama Sr. go to study economics in Hawaii. From the relative trickle of the 1960s, thousands of young Kenyans travel to the United States every year, seeking an education with which to help build both countries. What most may not recall is that it was never a one-way traffic.

Thurgood Marshall, that distinguished American legal mind, visited Kenya and was one of the framers of the Constitution under which Kenya won independence. And there were others like him.

The independence Constitution survived for nearly half a century because it captured the aspirations of Kenyans, even at independence: equality under law, freedom of speech, the right to private property, and tolerance

These partnerships guarantee stability, bring prosperity, bolster our values, and protect and preserve the security of all

# Kenya-US relations have deep roots

of different faiths. We share these values with Americans.

And where it matters, like in the Horn of Africa, Kenyans and Americans have stood together to defend these values. For example, Somalia where the partnership between Kenya and the US is slowly yielding peace and prosperity.

Trade between Kenya and the US has been strong over the years. For example, by 2013, US-Kenya trade amounted to \$1.1 billion, with Kenya exporting \$451 million, and importing \$651 million. The \$451 million value of exports in 2013 represented a 16 per cent year-on-year increase. Given our location, our history, the dynamism of our people, the potential of our country and region, this trade can only grow.

The opportunities are numerous: in energy; in infrastructure; in agriculture, especially agro-processing; in tourism; in services, perhaps especially in retail; and in manufacturing and IT.

The US-Africa Leadership at which President Uhuru Kenyatta met three American Presidents; Barack Obama, George W Bush

and Bill Clinton, was an expression of this recognition and revitalised relationship.

These American presidents have had signature programmes on the continent. Mr Obama is presiding over one of the most ambitious infrastructure programmes ever attempted in Africa.

Mr Bush presided over the President's Emergency Plan for Aids Relief (Pepfar), which has saved many lives, and which has done much to turn the tide against HIV/Aids in Africa. In AGOA, President Bill Clinton left behind a substantial legacy of opportunity and trade between Africa and the US.

So therefore, has Kenya's foreign policy shifted its focus from West to East? Broadly, it is a false perception.

Kenya's position remains as it has always been: seeking a balanced engagement with traditional friends, while taking advantage of new opportunities. Mr Kenyatta has always maintained that Kenya is not just the gateway to East Africa, but sits atop a region that is vital for both Kenya and America's safety and prosperity.

Kenya has been at the forefront of integration clearly understanding that it is the region's path to shared prosperity. Kenya supports the opening of borders to allow a joint customs union; has encouraged the drive towards political federation to free the movement of peoples, goods and services across the region. America ought to partner with Kenya particularly in the area of securing the homeland. Indeed, Mr Kerry agreed with Mr Kenyatta on the importance of security training, intelligence sharing, and regional peace initiatives.

In choosing these themes, each of great importance for the security and prosperity of the region, Kenya and America are revitalising their relationship. That strengthening of relations between Kenya and the US, as well as between the US and the region, will be taken a notch higher during President Obama's upcoming trip in July thus completing a cycle that began many years ago.

*Prof Obonyo is Dean of Communications at Daystar University*