

# COURT PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT IN RWANDA

LEADING THE WAY TO PEOPLE CENTERED JUSTICE

Part 2



# COURT PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT IN THE REPUBLIC OF RWANDA

## Leading the Way to People Centered Justice

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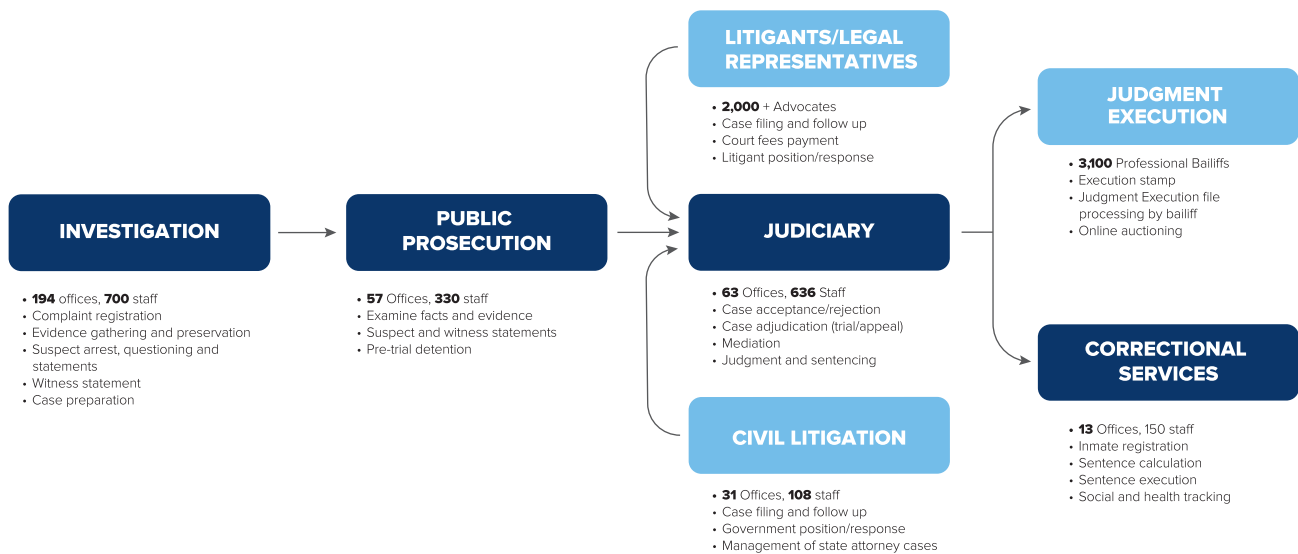


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Court Administrator, introduced people-centered justice, an approach focused on those served by courts instead of those who “run” them – judicial officers, court administrators, and other officials. It discussed the role of technology in achieving this focus in general terms. Here in Part 2, we focus on the functionality of Rwanda’s Integrated Electronic Case Management System (IECMS), and the Judicial Performance Management System (JPMS), and the mechanics of converting data tracking, performance measurement and management to service delivery outcomes in Rwanda. We will describe how technology enables daily improvements in service delivery to achieve people-centered justice.

The Rwandan justice system’s Integrated Electronic Case Management System (IECMS) serves as the single point of entry for securing and recording case-related information and efficiently sharing that information among relevant sector institutions. The system, developed by Synergy International Systems, Inc., has been operational since January 2016 and comprises modules for six institutions of Rwanda’s Justice Reconciliation Law and Order Sector (JRLOS): the Rwanda Investigation Bureau (RIB), the National Public Prosecution Authority (NPPA), the Rwanda Judiciary, the Rwanda Correctional Services (RCS), the Civil Litigation Service (CLS), and Judgment Execution and Online Auction (see Figure 1). In May 2022, after six years of continuous technical support services provided by Synergy, the full scope of technical support and maintenance of the IECMS was handed off to JRLOS.

Whereas IECMS captures all case-related information in both civil and criminal matters from filing to execution in all JRLOS institutions, the Judicial Performance Management System (JPMS) is a system specific for the Judiciary of Rwanda, which is integrated with IECMS, to measure court performance through case related operations in real-time. It also enables Judiciary administrators to track non-case related data, such as progress against the Judiciary’s overarching strategic plan and annual action plans and their impact on case statistics.



**Figure 1:** JRLOS Institutions Using IECMS in Criminal and Civil Matters

## IECMS

# PEOPLE-CENTERED FUNCTIONALITY FOR DAILY OPERATIONAL CASE MANAGEMENT

The IECMS is a daily operational tool for more than 2,000 advocates, 636 court administration professionals, 700 investigators, 330 prosecutors, 3,100 bailiffs, 108 civil litigation officers, and 150 correctional service officers to support service delivery across the entire informational chain of custody in the JRLOS, including investigation, prosecution, case filing and processing, adjudication, decision writing, and judgment execution. It is also used by JRLOS leadership to monitor and improve performance. From the perspective of people-centered justice, the key stakeholders of the IECMS are the individual litigants and the advocates who represent them. From the initial creation of an account to electronic case filing, payment of court fees, receipt of notifications, case status or event follow-up, judgment execution and online auctioning, the user experience for an individual

litigant is not simply an extractive process to collect data. It is, first and foremost, a service. Providing the individual litigant with meaningful information and a positive user experience is itself a process that improves access to justice. The IECMS’s helpdesk function gives users a single reference point to submit questions and get answers, as well as review other previously asked questions. The IECMS is a transparent platform where litigants can monitor in real-time all activities performed on their cases, both by their advocates or the court.

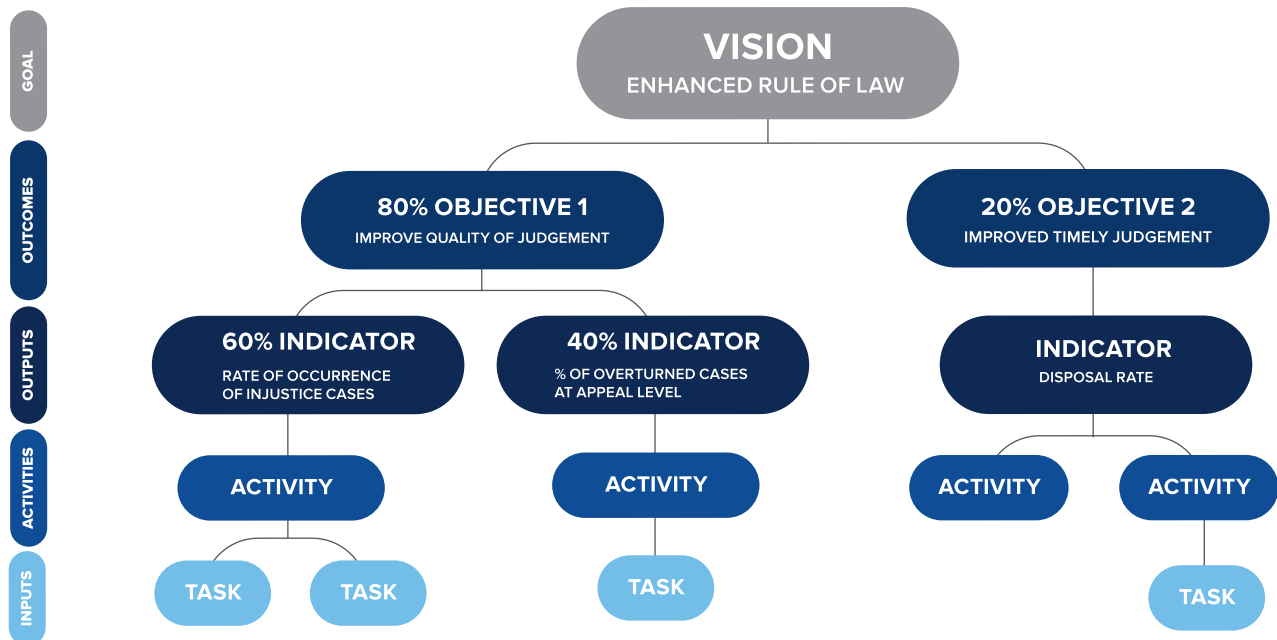


# JPMS

## CONVERTING DATA TRACKING TO PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT AND MANAGEMENT

The JPMS implemented in 2020 tracks case related statistics from IECMS, and administrative task statistics related to Judiciary initiatives to draw correlations between planned projects and tasks and their impact over time on case statistics. The goal of this is to improve performance measurement and management (PMM) of people-centered justice. In defining the strategic plan implementation, the vision is broken down to weighted objectives based on their importance to achieving the overall Judiciary vision of enhancing the rule of law, from objectives to indicators, and activities, all the way down to daily actionable tasks in a top-down approach. After implementation, results are aggregated, in a bottom-up approach, to quantitatively measure real-time performance and outcomes. (Figure 2).

In JPMS, the Judiciary measures the strategic plan from vision to daily tasks using three parameters in a comparative manner: performance (percentage of achievements against set targets), work progress (percentage of activities completed compared to planned activities), and budget execution (percentage of budget spent compared to planned budget). These parameters are compared in real-time to assess what works and what does not, enabling the Judiciary to correct course dynamically to improve results. For instance, if more than 50% of planned activities have been implemented and the budget has been fully spent, but the performance has not improved, then either the activities or indicators must be reassessed as the intended objectives are not being accomplished.

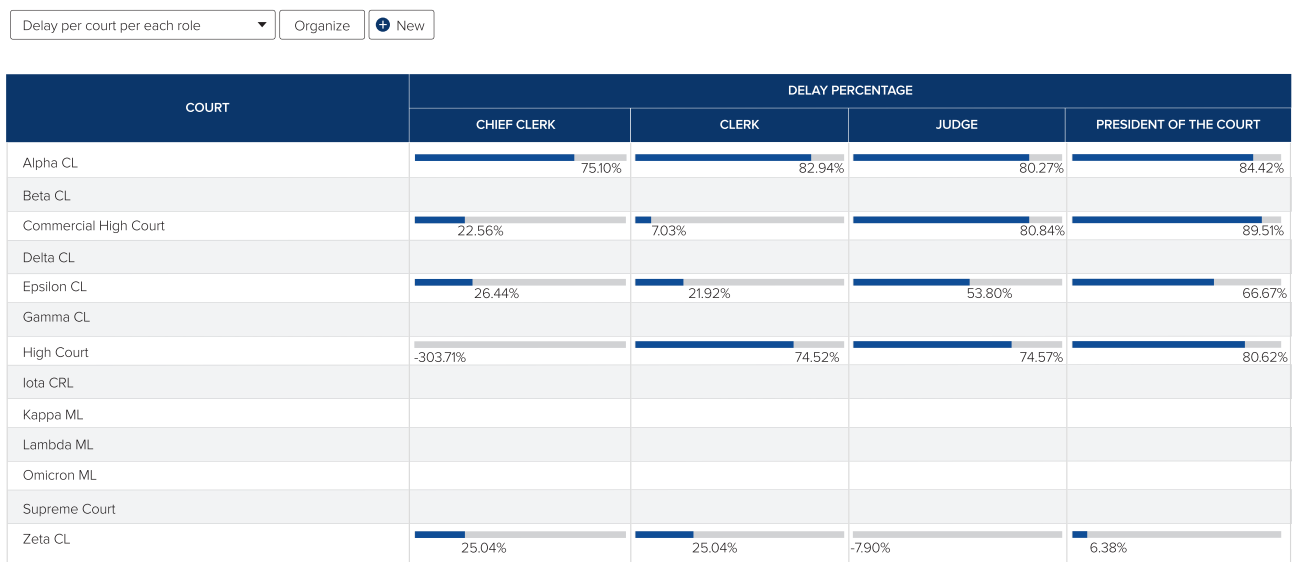


**Figure 2:**  
The Judiciary Vision Breakdown into Daily Tasks

Targets are set at the indicator, court, activity, and task level for both judicial officers and administrative staff. For each task, performance is measured by the timeliness in which it is performed, the quality of output, and the conduct of the staff offering the service. It is believed that court clients must be given quality service, in a timely manner, and must be met with the highest conduct and competence from court staff. Therefore, all these parameters (timeliness, quality, and conduct) must be fulfilled for each task, by each individual staff. For example, the registrar at the reception is expected to decide about admissibility of each case within two days and other claims within one day. This decision is considered good quality if it is not overturned by the court president or judge. In addition, the registrar must exhibit a high level of customer care towards court clients which is measured by the percentage of complaints submitted by clients in relation to those serviced.

Court administrators can then use the JPMS to track overall aggregated performance of various indicators against set targets, with the ability to drill down to the raw data and actual results. For example, they can measure the average time it takes a case to be judged per court – analyzing showstoppers and delays per roles involved (clerk, registrar, judge, etc.), as in Figure 3 below. With this visibility they can quickly identify outliers and develop strategies to improve performance of particular roles and ensure faster justice delivery to the people.

When court administrators identify poor performance, they can easily filter by court and analyze data at the individual or case level. For example, when it is identified that the rate of adjourned cases is high, they can filter and identify which judges adjourn the highest percentage of cases and investigate the reasons. The rate of case adjournment is automatically identified by comparing the number of adjourned cases in relation to number of cases scheduled for hearing (Figure 4). Once the actual percentage of adjournment is identified, it is compared with the target to derive performance per judge or court.



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**Figure 3:** Percentage Delay Per Court for Each Role

2. Rate of case adjournment						
Indicator / Court / Individual	Baseline	Target	# of adjourned cases	# of cases with hearing scheduled	Actual	Performance%
Rate of case adjournment	11%	10%	24%	24%	24%	42
COMMERCIAL COURT	11%	10%	21%	21%	21%	48
Vera Vena			10%	10%	10%	
Oretha Boedeker			23%	23%	23%	
Marna Ratner			23%	23%	23%	
Cori Dollard			23%	23%	23%	
Joanie Geller			10%	10%	10%	
Caryl Egerton			29%	29%	29%	
Veda Hitchcock			21%	21%	21%	
Tabatha Raatz			13%	13%	13%	
Rebeca Ord			30%	30%	30%	
Letitia Presler			13%	13%	13%	
COMMERCIAL HIGH COURT	11%	11%	38%	38%	38%	26
Lynsey StJacques			41%	41%	41%	
Robbin Upchurch			38%	38%	38%	
Chere Seabrooks			27%	27%	27%	

Figure 4: Rate of Case Adjournment by Court and Judge

# CONVERTING PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT AND MANAGEMENT TO SERVICE DELIVERY OUTCOMES

As we suggested in Part 1 of this article, even the “right” court performance measures must be made to “talk.” Most justice systems employ some level of performance data collection, reporting, and analysis. The next step beyond simply reporting on performance, is to analyze the data for trends, gaps, or red flags. This type of analysis can then inform decision-making and learning. Being able to demonstrate that learning has occurred and been applied to further improve performance is the goal. What the Judiciary of Rwanda has done with its data and analysis is the key question when it comes to demonstrating a real focus on people-centered justice.

**CASE BACKLOG:** The IECMS revealed that between 2016 and 2019, new cases in primary courts increased by 56.9%.<sup>1</sup> The Judiciary understood that the continuation of this trend would present a challenge to fighting the case backlog. To create a balance between filed and pending cases against judged cases, mechanisms including court annexed mediation, small claims procedures, and measurable timelines for on-time case processing were put in place, and 20 additional lower court judges and registrars were hired in 2022. Between 2019 and 2020, mediated cases in pretrial increased by 6%<sup>2</sup> while mediated cases by the judge increased by 42% between 2020 and 2021. Using this approach ensures that the individual litigant’s matter is settled in the shortest time possible, eliminating unnecessary trial time and reducing the case backlog.

**TRIAL DATE CERTAINTY:** Analysis of trial date certainty, including analysis of case adjournments by judge and by court over time, revealed that irregular summons accounted for 10% of adjournments and led to new provisions in procedural laws for pretrial conferences and preliminary hearings that spell out processes that reduce adjournments. In addition, litigants access monthly hearings online, and are notified of trial dates and any changes in real

time by IECMS via e-mail and text.

On time case processing: In Rwanda, a case is considered backlogged if its judgment is not handed down within six months of its registration. The entire case process from filing to judgment has timelines for each step, defined by procedural laws and configurable in IECMS, which flags delayed items and sends notifications when deadlines are approaching.

In this way, the Judiciary of Rwanda is executing continuous improvement based on analyzed data to achieve people-centered results.

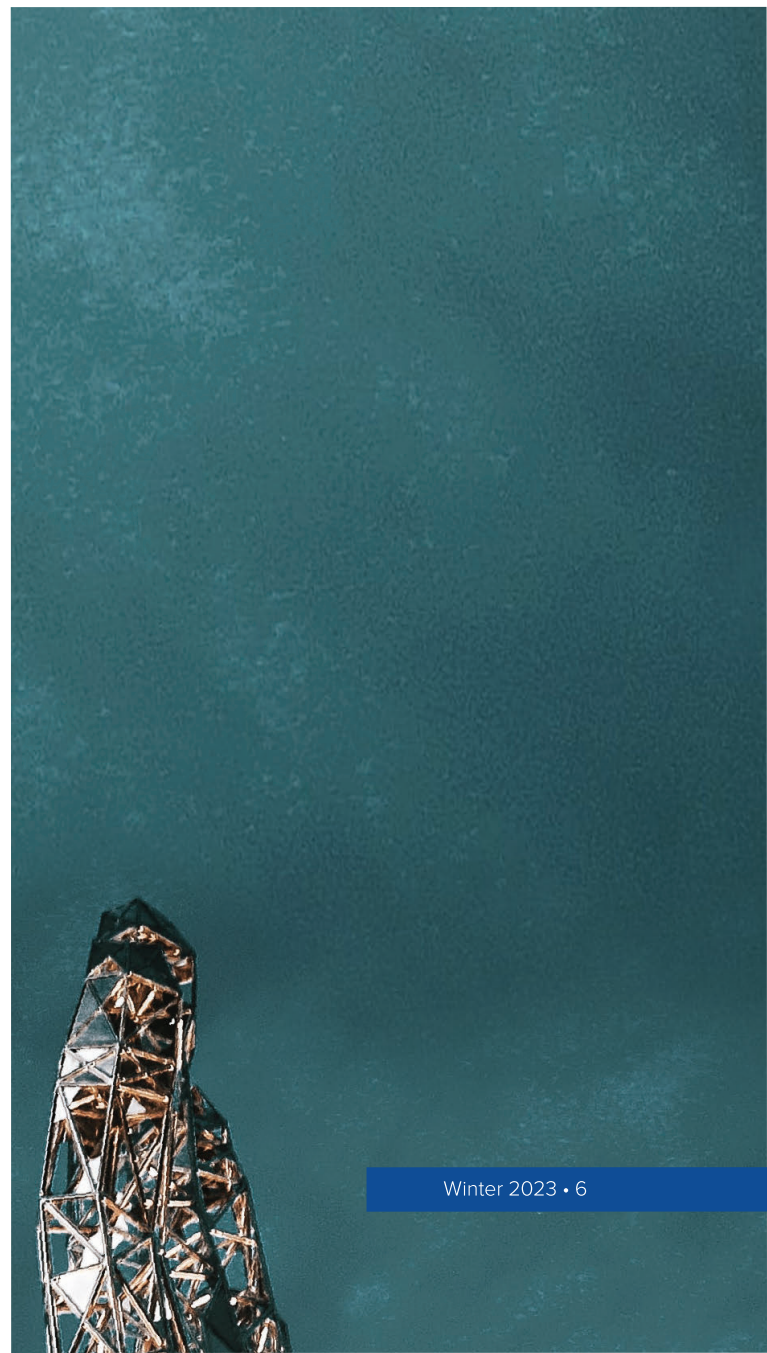
## ONGOING CHALLENGES AND LESSONS LEARNED

The JPMS is still in the early stages of utilization, and we expect the system to evolve as challenges are overcome, and lessons are learned and applied. Below are some identified challenges and lessons learned.

- **Capacity constraints.** Low levels of technical knowledge among system users, both court staff and litigants, could lead to inaccurate data inputs which produce erroneous information for the set measures. Such analysis could lead to misinformed decisions, so continuous training of system users is required.
- **Resistance to change.** As with all new systems and procedures, the JPMS implementation has faced resistance. It is to be expected that resistance will arise as people believe their personal capacity or productivity are under scrutiny. As such, periodic meetings and workshops are being put in place to explain performance measurement and management concepts and motivate system users.
- **Customer Satisfaction information:** Although a lot has been done in encouraging litigants to share their perceptions and thoughts on court procedures, litigants rarely use the provided channels to share such information. The Judiciary is therefore

radio, leveraging television networks and newspapers to promote citizen engagement and feedback.

- **Client involvement in court administration.** It is important to involve client representatives in court administration boards to ensure that their needs are well presented. For instance, the Rwandan Judicial High Council, which is the supreme governing body of the Judiciary, includes members of the Bar Association, Human Rights Commission, Ombudsman, institutions of higher learning, and Ministry of Justice, to ensure that decisions and measures in relation to performance management, among other things, consider citizen needs.





# CONCLUSION

Here are our recommendations for court administrators who want to achieve people-centered justice.

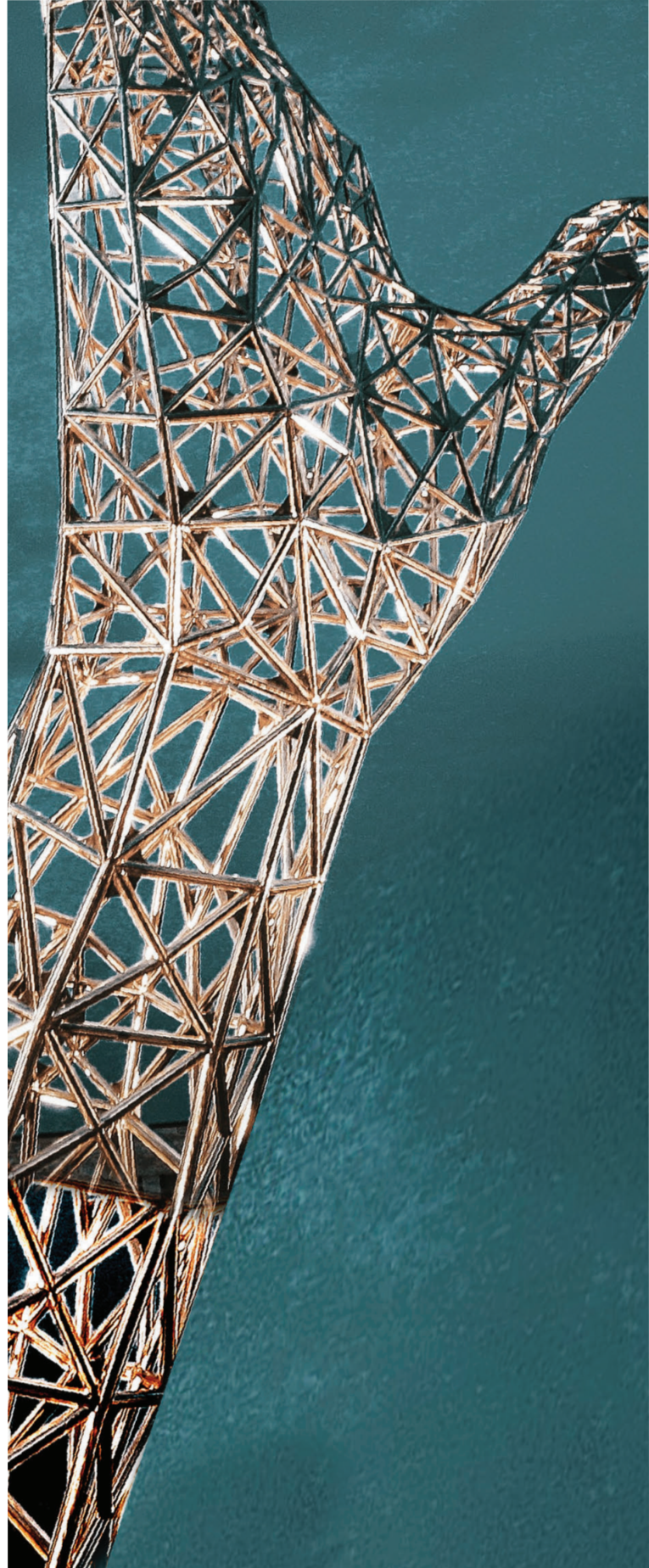
- **Identify the Right Indicators.** Not all standard indicators of court performance will point us toward people-centered justice. What are the most relevant measures?

Automate and Decentralize Data Collection. Automating data collection from Case Management Systems, collecting data from a broad swath of stakeholders, and presenting data in performance dashboards that can be easily understood and broadly distributed will help to drive people-centered change.

- **Build a Culture of Learning.** Without a systematic approach for integrating the review, analysis, implementation, and learning, no changes will be realized.

- **Make Data Open and Transparent.** Demonstrating progress over time through consistent tracking, reporting, and learning will produce a virtuous cycle of improved performance with real results for people.

As opposed to the popular and traditional opinion that performance monitoring and management hinders judicial independence, the Rwandan Judiciary has learned that instead it paves an intentional path to a clear vision while promoting accountability, transparency, and public trust. Powerful technology, such as the IECMS and JPMS embraced by the Rwandan Judiciary, has the potential to transform the way justice institutions and stakeholders work together, and most importantly, the way they interact with the people they serve. This can be done right now, in real time – not just in annual reports, thereby powering continuous improvement and people-centered justice.





**Synergy International Systems, Inc.** is a global technology and consulting company that empowers organizations and governments to become more data-driven in achieving their impact.

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