

# Mobile enhanced human rights reporting - the case of CHRAGG Tanzania

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**Abstract:** *This paper addresses the key factors that influence the adoption of m-government to support and enhance human rights in Tanzania; the experience of Commission for Human Rights and Good Governance.*

*The paper analyses SMS solution to support and enhance human rights and Good Governance in the Country. Besides, it reveals that though the government adopted e-government in improving interaction and efficiency of service delivery, there are several stumbling blocks that hinder the smooth utilization of the technology.*

*Poor internet infrastructure, high Internet cost, shortage of electricity in most parts of the country and Internet illiteracy among citizens have been serious barriers. To curb these challenges, it was found that the adoption of m-government through utilization of SMS seem to be the logical approach for delivering E-government services.*

**Keywords:** *e-government, m-government, SMS, CHRAGG, TUME,*

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## Introduction

Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) has provided Governments across the world new ways of doing business and delivering services. The adoption of ICT in various government sectors has enabled governments to enhance their relationship with their clients, citizens in particular.<sup>1</sup>

The adoption of ICT to enhance work efficiency and improve service delivery in order to meet the needs of the public in a responsive and transparent manner (e-government) has been given a conducive room in Tanzania. The Government of Tanzania recognises the imperativeness of ICT in the public sector and therefore prepared the National e-Government Strategy 2012-2017 to provide the required guidance on exploiting the ICT opportunities and addressing challenges for value added public sector services.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> URT, Tanzania e-Government strategy 2012 pg.1

<sup>2</sup> Ibid pg. 2

The adoption of e-government has strengthened the creation of a more open, user-oriented and democratic administration. As e-Government becomes more widespread, it is the government's aim to allow citizens to monitor the progress of their own cases via the Internet, and to be able to receive information on case procedures, decisions and case processing on time.

While the adoption of e-government has shown promising service delivery in the country, however, poor infrastructure has been a serious barrier. One of the fundamental issues associated with barriers is the question of access to e-Government services, that is the whole concept of digital divide: the gap between those with full access to electronic information and those without it due to such factors as socio-economic conditions, language barriers, physical situations, age, education, and so on. It is thus widely accepted that implementation of e-Government services should go hand in hand with strategies to narrow the digital divide.

It is with this view that, the Commission for Human Rights and Good Governance (CHRAGG) decided to adopt a mobile government strategy that will harmonise digital divide and therefore improve service delivery. CHRAGG has developed SMS for Human Rights System, integrated into the Case Management System and allow citizens to report violations against human rights and good governance through SMS.

This paper discusses in detail the motive behind the adoption of mobile government (m-government) to support and enhance human rights in Tanzania, the experience of commission for human rights and good governance (CHRAGG).

## **What is CHRAGG?**

In 1992 the Government of Tanzania initiated a broad review of the legal sector under the Framework for Institutional and Legal Management Upgrading Project (FILMUP), which resulted in the creation of a Legal Task Force. The report prepared by the Legal Task Force, among other things, critically analysed the strengths and weaknesses of the Permanent Commission of Enquiry (PCE). The report recommended the establishment of a Commission for Human Rights and Administrative Justice in place of PCE. Following the approval of the report, the Government invited the public to air their views on the proposal to establish the Commission and related issues. The outcome of the process was the 'Kisanga Report', which confirmed that the establishment of the Human Rights Commission was generally acceptable to the public.

The Commission became operational in Mainland Tanzania on the 1st July 2001 after the coming into force of the Commission for Human Rights and Good Governance Act No7 of 2001 as amended by Act No 16 of 2001 and Government Notice No. 311 of 8th June 2001. The Commission was officially inaugurated on the 15th March 2002 following the appointment and swearing in of its Commissioners by the President of the United Republic of Tanzania. The Commission became operational in Zanzibar in 2007 after the Zanzibar House of Representative ratified the Act.

The Commission is an independent government department, established as the national focal point institution for the promotion and protection of human rights and duties as well as good governance in Tanzania. The composition, functions, powers, privileges and other matters in relation to the Commission are established by article 129 of the Constitution, and regulated by Act No.7 of 2001.<sup>3</sup>

The Act specifies a number of functions for the Commission, and the key ones being to:

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<sup>3</sup> CHRAGG op.cit pg.18

- Promote within the country the protection and the preservation of human rights and of duties to the society in accordance with the Constitution and laws of the land;
- Receive and address allegations and complaints on the violation of human rights and contravention of principles of good governance;
- Conduct research into human rights, administrative justice and good governance issues and educate the public about such issues;
- Investigate the conduct of any person whom or any institution which discharges functions in excess of authority.

It's a constitutional and statutory establishment enabled it to provide fair, effective and expeditious redress mechanisms for victims of contravention of principles of good governance and human rights violations. The Commission also promotes and protects fundamental human rights, freedoms and duties of all persons in the country.<sup>4</sup>

The Commission also works as an ombudsman, since its founding legislation abolished the Permanent Commission of Enquiry (the Ombudsman) that dealt with the investigations of complaints of abuse of power by public bodies.

The Commission is empowered to promote ratification of or accession to treaties or conventions on human rights, harmonization of national legislation, monitor and assess compliance, within the country by the government and other persons. The Commission complements the formal legal system by providing a flexible mechanism for addressing human rights issues, governance problems and violation of human rights and the practice of good governance. The Commission acts proactively to address such problems and develops strategies to address these problems in a manner which the court cannot, and plays a developmental role through its educational and information programmes.<sup>5</sup>

## **The transition From Manual to e-government through adoption of SMS.**

Tanzania is located on the East Coast of Africa with borders to Kenya and Uganda to the North, Rwanda, Burundi and the Democratic Republic of the Congo to the West and Zambia, Malawi and Mozambique to the South. The total population is estimated at 44,928,923 for 2012 with rural residents that account for 77 per cent of the population. Tanzania is one of the poorest countries in the world, according to the Human Development Report 2006, where it is ranked 162 out of a total of 177 countries.

Tanzania received an e-government ranking of 137 out of 184 countries, according to the UN's Global E-Government Survey 2010, with an e-index of 0.293 compared to the world average of 0.441.<sup>6</sup> These data therefore reveals that the utilization of e-government in public services is still at an infant stage.

Besides, the statistical information available in the CHRAGG offices reveals that the large proportional of the population living in the rural areas where infrastructure and communications are poor, lodging complaints and receiving confirmation or feedback has been an issue.

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid

<sup>5</sup> Ibid

<sup>6</sup> Ibid pg.30

Complainants have to either use the postal services that may be slow and unreliable or to travel to one of the offices of the commission the situation that is time consuming and costly.

Electricity is inadequate, unreliable, scarce, costly and not easily available in most parts of Tanzania. In 2000, 9 per cent of the population had access to electricity.<sup>7</sup>

Tanzania faces severe power problems both in rural areas as well as in the main cities. Even in the major city, Dar es Salaam, long power-rationing periods occur.<sup>8</sup> Concerning the road system, most main roads are gravel roads with only minor parts being paved. During the rainy season, rural areas in southern and central Tanzania are not accessible at all.<sup>9</sup>

The CHRAGG is not adequately spread in the country and therefore submission of complaints for rural dwellers or other complainants in regions without CHRAGG offices is tiresome and very challenging.

To curb this problem, CHRAGG has recently initiated the project of complaint handling system from a manual to a digital by implementing a Case Management System. As an additional functionality, and to rely on the rapid increase in accessibility and affordability of mobile phones, CHRAGG has developed SMS for Human Rights System integrated to the Case Management System and allow citizens to report violations against human rights and good governance through SMS. This system will save Citizens both the cost of the trip and the loss of time travelling to the Commission offices or risking delays by post.

The system has been developed in collaboration with coding expertise from Bessbrook International Ltd., the local IT private company in a Private Public Partnership.

## **The motive behind the adoption of SMS in handling complaints**

Mobile technology is the fastest growing communication technology in history and is fundamentally changing the way we communicate. This holds true all over the world.<sup>10</sup> Mobile-broadband subscriptions have climbed from 268 million in 2007 to 2.1 billion in 2013. This reflects an average annual growth rate of 40%, making mobile broadband the most dynamic ICT market.<sup>11</sup> The number of Tanzanian phone subscribers has reached more than 28, 000, 000, in the year 2012, with the majority using mobile phones. According to Quarterly statistics report released by Tanzania Communication Regulatory Authority (TCRA), shows that the country has 28,024,611 phone subscribers in all mobile and wired networks. Several factors have contributed

to the rapid growth in mobile phone subscribers. These include: (i) the relatively low cost of adding new subscribers to the cellular network (mobiles are much more scalable than fixed-line phones), (ii) the high premium placed on mobility by consumers, (iii) the strong presence of the private investors in mobile phone provision, as rising demand by consumers has boosted profits for manufacturers and operators alike, and lastly (iii) the growing favorable regulatory environment fueling this exponential growth.

Mobile phone technology in Tanzania has been growing at an amazing pace in terms of both the number of service providers as well as that of the users. Due to this growth, the Tanzanian

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid

<sup>8</sup> (Sheriff 2007)

<sup>9</sup> Wicander op.cit.pg.33

<sup>10</sup> Wicander op.cit pg.19

<sup>11</sup> ITU (2013).ICT facts and figures

government through the Act of Parliament (2003) established the Tanzania Communication Regulatory Authority (TCRA) to regulate communication and broadcasting activities. By 2009, a total of six (6) mobile phone service providers were issued communication licenses by TCRA. These providers are TIGO, Zanzibar Telecoms (ZANTEL Mobile), Vodacom, Benson, TTCL (Mobile) and Celtel - now known as Airtel. In addition to that, two fixed line companies i.e. Tanzania Tele-Communication Limited (TTCL) and Zanzibar Telecoms (ZANTEL) have been operating along with the existing mobile phone service providers.

The rapid expansion of mobile phone usage in Tanzania has been triggered by a highly competitive market and service diversification, with the operators now providing different mobile phone services such as voice and message transmission, data services, paging as well as Internet services.

SMS is a widespread and accepted way of communication. Arguments in favour of SMS can be found in terms of its cost, speed, and accuracy.<sup>12</sup> The fact that most rural and urban dwellers in Tanzania lack access to computers and the Internet as well as landline phones, coupled with the dramatic growth of mobile phone access through most of Tanzania, creates an opportunity for the use of the mobile network in handling human rights violation complaints.

In developing countries and Tanzania in particular, people are more familiar with SMS than the Internet, the number of SMS users is much higher, the SMS infrastructure is more extensive, SMS costs are lower than Internet costs and mobile phones are much more affordable than PCs. For these reasons SMS could be the more appropriate channel to deliver E-government services in developing countries. Additionally, SMS-based E-government has proven benefits.

It therefore goes without saying that handling of complaints through the SMS channel significantly reduces time and cost; introduces a cheaper, easier and faster information-accessing channel; improves transparency, accountability, communication, and the relationship between government and citizens; makes the services and procedures easier for the citizens to use; improves the political image of the district, engages more people and increases citizens participation, and promotes E-democracy.<sup>13</sup>

## The experience of CHRAGG

SMS for human rights system was developed by the Commission for human rights and good governance in collaboration with Coding experts from a Bessbrook International (T) Ltd with support from SPIDER, the system was developed using Free and open source (FOS). The main function of the SMS for human right system was to enable Citizens to submit their complaints before the Commission via SMS technology.

The system was developed to cater for those who live in rural and remote areas. To be able to use the SMS system the complainant will be required to send a message using mobile phone 0754 460259 This system design comprises three fundamental components:

1. Complainant enter and submit complaint through their phones.
2. A centralized server sitting in the Commission office connected via a modem to the telecom providers, which coordinates all the data that flows through the system and directs it to the correct recipient.

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<sup>12</sup> Wicander op.cit.pg.20

<sup>13</sup> Ibid

3. A password protected web interface for Commission's officials and implementing partners, where they can view information, graphs, and maps showing how the system is performing in real-time.

## Current complaint status

The number of complaints received is on increase, there is a plan to conduct the intensive awareness raising campaign to cater the level of a ward in all thirty regions in the country. From the current trend/usage it appear that many citizens will be encouraged to use the system to report human rights violations. However this will give the commission the challenge to be able to resolve the complaints on time.

The following table shows the number of messages that have been received and sent from the system:-

1. Messages received - 173,702
2. Messages Sent (replied) - 174,225
3. Total - 347,927

The total number of messages transacted in the SMS for human rights system to date is 347,927. As indicated above, the SMS system is built to receive message and at the same time to send acknowledgment message to the sender, that is done automatically after the receipt of complainant message. Table one shows the number of messages received against the message replied, the reason for this is because we did not noticed a bug which was duplicating some of the replies therefore the additional of 523 were (acknowledgements)to senders by error.

## Received Complaints

The complaints/messages received needs to be authenticated and be filtered to be able to be admissible to the commission, this process of authentication required a team of experts and investigators) who they qualify the complaints to be a genuine complaint. From the total number of messages received only 597 messages have been authenticated and being passed to the Commission for further the investigation. There have been several challenges contribute to this problem including lack of awareness of being able to send complaints, we have also been receiving adverts/ promotion messages, gambling messages etc.

To be able to submit the complaint complainant type complaint and send to the number 0754 46059

The example of the submission is as follow:-

**Report** I have beaten by police at police post x then send to 0754 460259 in order to follow up the status of successful complaint the complainant will type

**Status** 3020 and send to 0754 460259

The experience shows that many user fail to submit the message as per the instructions, the experience shows most of received messages appear start without the prefix "report" and hence these are not reported to the successful complaint column as a result more than 322 complaints were registered as fault messages. The system is built to capture all the messages therefore manual work is required for clarifications and confirmation of all complaint received in a day.

1. Complaint received correctly - 275

2. Complaints received wrongly without prefix word "Report" - 322

CHRAGG has received a total of 597 complaints since its launching in 27th June 2013.

## Unwanted Spamming text

SMS for human right system has been receiving spamttext messages, we communicated with Vodacom unsuccessful and we came to realize some of the number charge the system when it reply, Vodacom seems not to be aware of its actions but strangle all the offices we visited, City Centre - Posta and Mlimani City they never helped much on this problem. The cost of message is 68 shillings, therefore so far CHRAGG spent more than 7,000 US\$ for reply to these messages.

Mobile phone adverts including gumbling messages seems to cost the Commission great time in sorting complaints as well as cost of messages reply however CHRAGG has written to Vodacom to ask the number to be excluded, they seems not to care.

1. A number identified as **Vodacom** submitted 329 messages
2. A number identified as **15544** submitted 132 messages
3. A number identified as **15577** submitted 171,659 messages

The problem of these messages is that they make the work of sorting messages to be tedious and cumbersome.

## Processing complaints

All complaints received via SMS must be authenticated to establish it's legitimate, the authentication exercise involves: -

1. Calling back the complainant to take full details of the complaints, and who he/she is complaining against
2. Request additional evidences via post, fax, physical deliver or via email, what complainant benefit with the system is that he/she submit complaint to the Commission and there after investigation staff can follow up. The complaint received must have evidences in this case SMS can not support receiving documents, therefore complainant is required to use alternative messages provided above to submit the supporting documents.

## Successful complaints

A successful Complaint submitted via SMS once is authenticated and verified to be a valid and from a genuine complainant, then the Complaint is then lodged to the Case Management System as a new Complaint. This allows the investigation to start.

## Processing complaints

The experience shows that the SMS for human right system is used as a whistle blower tool, a number of complaints have been received which aimed to tip the Commission about the human rights violations some where in the country. In most case these information requires urgent

response, however the Commission's current working procedure required the complaints to pass several departments and Sections in order for the Investigation to start, as shown in the figure below

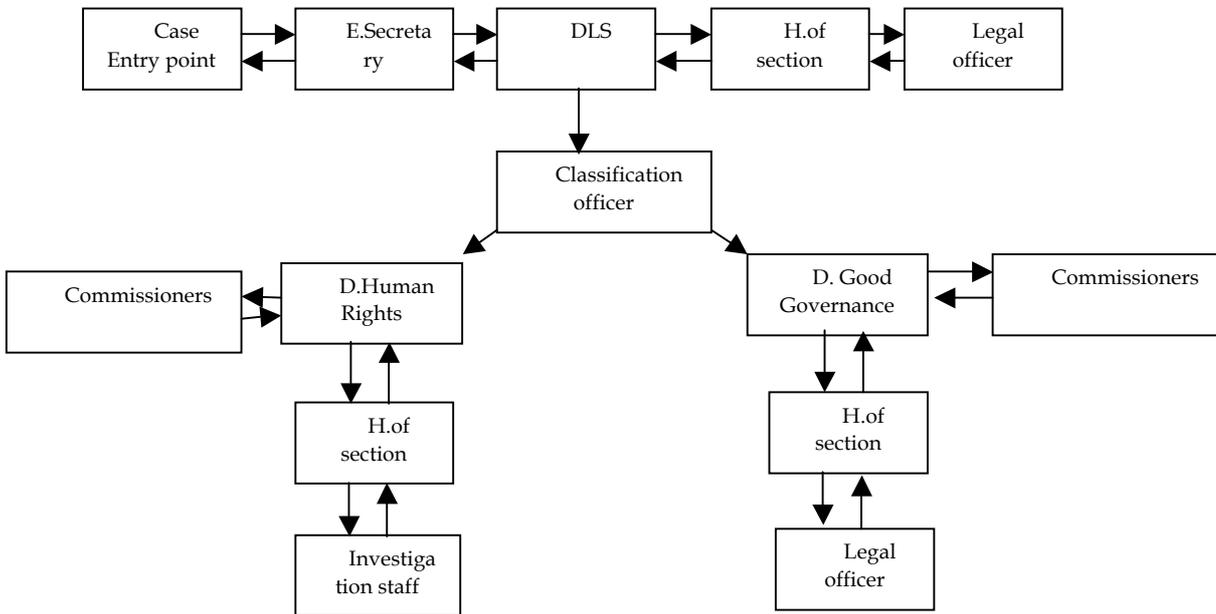


Fig 1: The Commission's Case flow

According to the working guidelines there are check and balance within the Commission which requires the complaint to be thorough checked with different officers and the Commissioners in order to start investigations Any complaint requires 15 days and pass into ten diferent staff in order to start the investigation, the SMS system has brought a quick responses and force the Commission staff to change how they work. Current the Commission is reviewing its working processes and hopeful this process will be shortened.

## How the sms for human rights system works

Initial investigation of the SMS is to see whether this is a genuine complaint, investigation staff will conduct preliminary check and if they are satisfied it will be submitted for further investigations

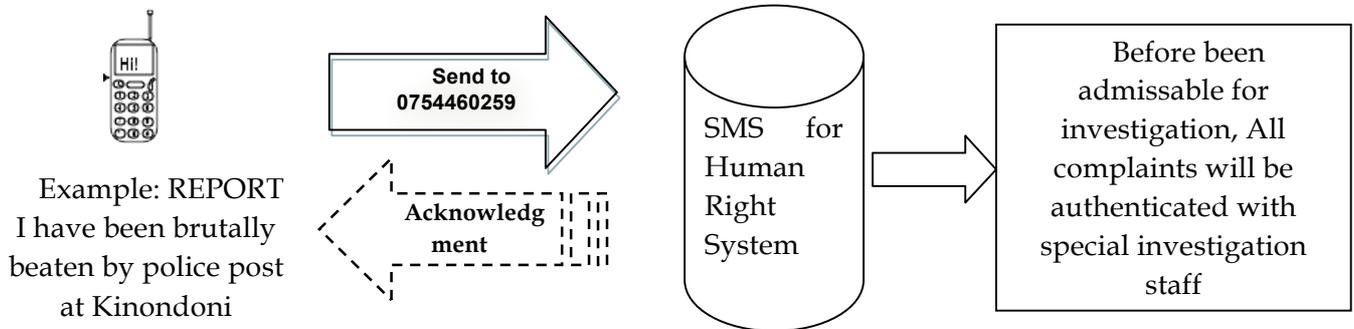


Figure 2: How the SMS system receives complaint to Complaints handling system

Once the investigation Unit confirm that this is a genuine complaint then, it will be passed to the second level, which is investigation stage. Different team will register the complaint to the Case Management system for the The complaint will

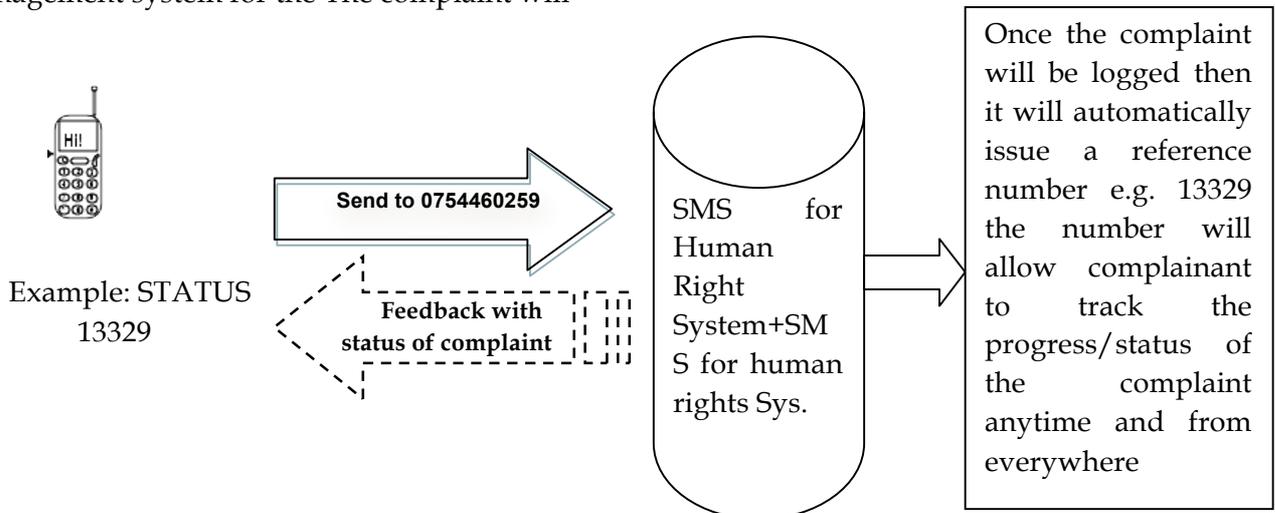


Figure 3: How the SMS system obtain status from Case Management System

### Complaints Status

The complaints passes three status,

- a. Admissability - Legal dept every complaints need to be checked for its admissability
- b. Classification - the complaints is either channeled to HR Dept or Good governance dept for the investigation,
- c. Decision time- complaints goes to the Commissions for recommendations

## Challenges

The Commission has only conducted awareness in seven (7) regions out from 30 regions in the country. The awareness campaigns were conducted to journalists, NGO staff and secondary students. The seminar ranging from one day –five days were conducted in several part of the country in order to create awareness on the existence of the SMS for human right system, during the launch we conducted the media campaign and also the press release.

The regions visited include Dar es Salaam, Mwanza and Lindi region, lack of adequate funds hindered the expansion of the awareness campaign. Therefore, not many Tanzanians are aware of SMS for human right system. This is a huge step back and the system might not be used to its fully extent. So far the Commission has conducted awareness seminar and training to 210 students,112 journalists and 30 Civil society members

## Conclusion

The mobile technology has transformed various governments in providing services to its citizens even in areas with poor infrastructure, shortage of electricity and internet connectivity. Mobile technology has removed barriers and empowering citizens to quickly and efficiently connect to government for various services such as healthy, education and human rights violation complaints. However, In order to increase the usage of SMS-based m-government services, government should make citizens aware of and provide information about the services by organizing various awareness campaigns.

The CHRAGG should reach all regions in order to disseminate information about the use of SMS in submitting complaints. Citizens should be educated on proper use of SMS channels so that they cannot abuse the system.

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## About the Author

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Wilfred Warioba is currently as the the head of Management Information Unit, at the Commission for Human Rights and Good Governance and he is also a project Coordinator for SMS for human right system. He joined the Commission April 2007, after working in the academics for over seven years. He received MSc In Computer Forensics (Thesis) Open University,2010 Tanzania, BSc (Hon) in Computing and Network System Management, University of Lincolnshire and Humberside 2000, UK, he attained Higher National Diploma in Computing, 1999, Reading school of Art and Technology, Certificate in - "Business related IT-Consultancy" 2004 in Germany, Diploma in German Language 2004

He started his IT carrier 1998-2000 at Specialist Computer Holdings recruitment agency In United kingdom, where he worked as a System Engineer and Database Operator, he has academic and industrial experience, In year 2001 he joined University of Dar es Salaam Computing Centre as Instructor Cum Technical staff later becomes the Head of training (2001-2005). In year 2004-2006 he worked as IT Expert for the DANIDA project Establishment CHRAGG, later worked as ICT Coordinator for for Tumaini University Dar es Salaam College the position he held until he joined back to the Commission for human rights and good governance as Head of Management Information Systems. Wilfred is a member of ICT Security Research Group of the Open University of Tanzania, He is a human rights defender and also a vice chairman for KASO (Kijana Amka Sasa Organisation).

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