

UNION POSTALE

MOVING THE POSTAL SECTOR FORWARD SINCE 1875 | **SUMMER 2025**



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A nighttime aerial photograph of the Dubai skyline. The Burj Khalifa is the central focus, illuminated with blue and white lights. Other skyscrapers like the Burj Dubai and the Jumeirah Emirates Towers are also visible, lit up with various colors. The foreground shows a complex highway interchange with many cars, their lights creating a blurred effect. The overall scene is vibrant and modern.

DESTINATION DUBAI



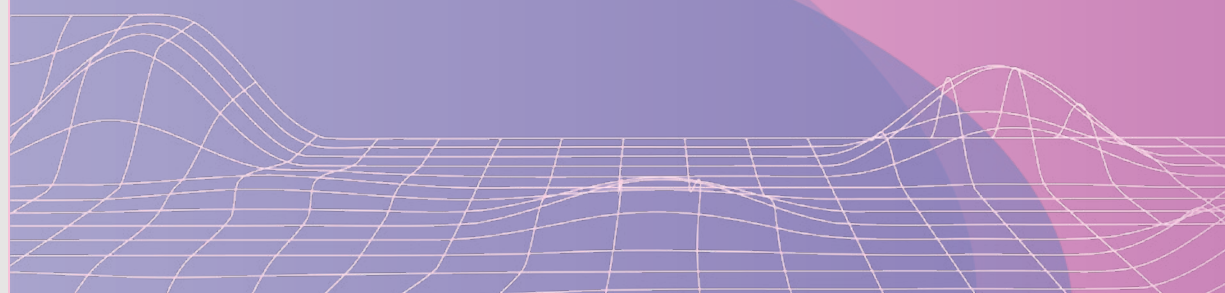
VOICE MAIL




DIGITAL UNION



POSTAL MATTERS






"Voice Mail" brings postal stories from around the world to life.

Each episode features voices from across the sector. From those delivering mail on the ground to the decision-makers shaping global logistics, and the many behind-the-scenes professionals keeping the system running smoothly.

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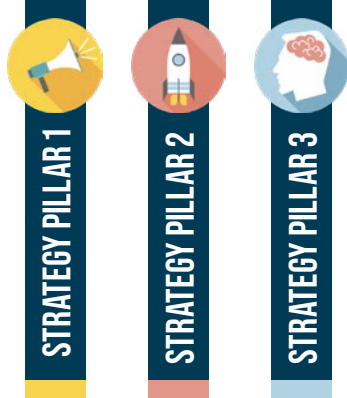


The UPU's blog "Postal Matters" offers fresh insights into the international postal sector, as well as its technological advances and latest innovations. Postal operators and other postal sector players are welcome to send us their contributions containing reflections, views and perspectives on the postal future, e-commerce, sustainable development, financial inclusion and other related areas.

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To have your postal blog featured, contact us at communication@upu.int





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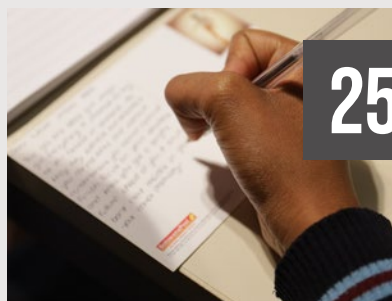
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PIONEERING ACCESS: BUILDING RAILROADS TO RURAL INDIA

India is a vast and diverse country, with over 800 million people living in rural areas. Yet, one of its biggest engines of economic growth – logistics – has long faced a serious challenge in reaching these regions. While urban consumers increasingly benefit from fast e-commerce delivery, many remote regions remain underserved by traditional supply chains.

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WNS 2.0: A GAME-CHANGING TOOL FOR THE PHILATELIC INDUSTRY

The Universal Postal Union (UPU) is rolling out a new AI-based philatelic tool, which is set to revolutionize stamp collecting globally, while enabling postal operators to protect revenues and combat counterfeiting.

UNION POSTALE

UNION POSTALE is the Universal Postal Union's flagship magazine, founded in 1875. It is published quarterly in four languages and takes a closer look at UPU activities, featuring international news and developments from the postal sector.

The magazine regularly publishes well researched articles on topical issues facing the industry, as well as interviews with the sector's leading individuals. It is distributed widely to the UPU's 192 member countries, including thousands of decision-makers from governments and Posts, as well as other postal stakeholders. All regard it as an important source of information about the UPU and the postal sector at large.

UNION POSTALE is also published in French, Spanish, Arabic, and Chinese.

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SUMMER 2025

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DUBAI AT THE CROSSROADS OF POSTAL TRANSFORMATION



“As we gather in Dubai, we must take bold, forward-looking decisions to ensure that the UPU network remains relevant, resilient and fit for purpose.”

Masahiko Metoki
Director General, UPU



The 28th Universal Postal Congress in Dubai marks a pivotal moment for the global postal sector. Postal operators today face an increasingly complex environment shaped by digitalization, shifting customer expectations, and the imperative for more sustainable and inclusive services. As we gather in Dubai, we must take bold, forward-looking decisions to ensure that the UPU network remains relevant, resilient and fit for purpose.

The past four years have been challenging, yet also illuminating. Volumes of traditional international mail continue to decline, while global e-commerce has surged ahead – largely outside of the UPU network. The message is clear: we must act now to bring new value, speed, reliability and visibility to the services we offer. And we must do so while upholding the UPU’s enduring mission of providing universal postal services to all people, everywhere.

At the heart of the discussions is the draft UPU strategy for 2026–2029, developed through an extensive global consultation process. This included the 2023 strategy summit, six regional strategy forums and a public stakeholder survey, yielding a shared vision: a society that is interconnected, inclusive and sustainable, empowered by a seamless, innovative postal network.

To realize this vision, the strategy sets out three goals: to leverage the single postal territory through a rules-based system; to strengthen the global postal ecosystem through innovation that facilitates communication and trade; and to enable postal development through enhanced cooperation and regionalization.

These priorities are supported by three integrated, cycle-long roadmaps: the Integrated Product Plan, which modernizes postal services through a flexible, e-commerce-aligned service portfolio; the Integrated Remuneration System, which

ensures fair, cost-based and performance-linked compensation between postal operators; and the Integrated Quality of Service Plan, which strengthens service delivery through unified standards and addressing key performance gaps.

The Congress will also consider proposals to support the sector’s transition to low-emission and energy-resilient operations, advance women’s participation in the postal workforce, and expand access to a wider range of digital and affordable financial services. These initiatives reaffirm our sector’s role in sustainable development and social inclusion.

Further proposals aim to strengthen engagement with the wider postal sector by clarifying the roles of the Consultative Committee and the Ready-to-Market Interoperability Group, and establishing mechanisms for coordination. These changes will support innovation, improve interoperability and help restore e-commerce volumes to the network.

A new development cooperation policy will build on the expansion of the UPU’s regional presence and promote inclusive, results-driven project management. While prioritizing the least developed, landlocked and small island developing countries, the policy will ensure that all regions benefit from closer access to UPU support.

With the support of the United Arab Emirates as host, and the engagement of 192 member countries, the 28th Congress offers a defining opportunity to reimagine the future of the postal sector. Let us meet this moment together – with unity, bold vision and commitment to delivering meaningful outcomes for people and postal stakeholders everywhere.

Masahiko Metoki
Director General, UPU

COUNTDOWN TO CONGRESS

EDITOR'S NOTE

As the 28th Universal Postal Congress approaches, this edition of Union Postale explores the ideas and innovations shaping the future of the UPU and the global postal sector. At the heart of the discussions is a bold, new proposed vision for the UPU: to empower an interconnected, inclusive, and sustainable society through a seamless and innovative postal network.

Our cover story takes readers to the centre of the Congress agenda, where decisions will be made to position the post as the delivery service provider of choice in an increasingly competitive e-commerce environment. Achieving this is not just a goal - it's a necessity for ensuring the long-term viability of universal postal services.

This issue also covers the outcomes of the five regional Postal Leaders Forums, where postal executives discussed challenges and strategies ahead of Congress. The UPU's Knowledge Centre shares how it's exploring the potential of AI to address challenges and harness opportunities for the sector – from improving item tracking to security innovations that keep customers and postal staff safe.

Meanwhile, insights from the EMS Cooperative's newly appointed Chair reveal how EMS Vision 2029 is aligning postal operations with customer-centric, tech-forward strategies to meet growing e-commerce demands.

From global to local, this issue also highlights solutions shared by newcomers to the UPU. A feature on ElasticRun, one of the newest members of the Consultative Committee, shows how its rural-first innovation is transforming e-commerce inclusion in India.

Rounding out the issue, we spotlight how postal services in Kenya and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines are supporting government objectives and building resilience within their communities.

As the UPU and its members chart the path forward, this edition offers a timely glimpse into the sector's potential evolution.

Happy reading!

YANA BRUGIER
Editor-in-chief



POST

HEALTH



Ministry of Internal Affairs
and Communications, JAPAN

The Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communication of Japan (MIC) has announced a 300,000 USD support to Post4health



La Poste Groupe (France) is supporting the Post4Health Facility with a total amount of 100,000 USD.

CALL FOR DONORS

No one is safe until everyone is reached.

With over three billion people living in rural or isolated areas, ensuring access to life-saving health products remains one of the greatest logistical challenges of our time.

The Universal Postal Union's Post4Health facility was created during the early stages of COVID-19 vaccine deployment, when many countries lacked the cold-chain infrastructure needed for vaccine delivery. Postal operators, often the only service present in hard-to-reach areas, proved their critical role by distributing medicines, tests and protective equipment at the height of the pandemic.

Today, Post4Health has grown into a broader initiative helping Posts deliver vaccines, medicines, diagnostics and health services across national territories. In many countries, postal operators serve as the official distributors of medical equipment, yet increased demand have strained their capacity.

Post4Health addresses these challenges by supporting Posts with temperature-controlled vehicles, cold-chain equipment, and logistics expertise, ensuring safe, reliable delivery of essential supplies to even the most remote communities.

As the United Nations specialized agency for the postal sector, the UPU is proud to lead this effort, but we cannot do it alone.

Support the Post4Health facility and help extend life-saving services to the last mile.

For more information,
please contact:
post4health@upu.int

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As a multi-stakeholder facility, Post4Health provides a flexible platform for donors to increase synergies and have a greater impact. In order to operate, Post4Health relies on voluntary funding from governments, national Posts, the private sector and development partners.

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SHAPING THE FUTURE OF EMS: A CONVERSATION WITH EMS COOPERATIVE BOARD CHAIR, NABIL BENSISSAID



As Chair of the EMS Cooperative Board since April 2024, Nabil Bensissaid shared his vision for the Cooperative's future in an interview with Union Postale. He brought with him over two decades of experience in the postal sector and the perspective of an operator from North Africa. As Director General of Algeria's EMS operator, Bensissaid spent years in the thick of operational challenges leading a strategy to enhance efficiency, elevate service quality, and drive innovation. His leadership marks a shift in the EMS Cooperative's history, as the first Chair from the Arab and African regions.

Interview by **MAKIKO HAYASHI**

"With a clear and inclusive vision, we can reshape EMS into a truly customer-centric, competitive delivery network," he said.

That vision took shape in the early days of his chairmanship. Bensissaid recognized that the EMS Cooperative could no longer rely on past strategies. The market had shifted dramatically, particularly since the COVID-19 pandemic. Volumes of international postal products, including EMS, continued to decline. Global postal supply chains were fragile. Customer expectations had evolved.

Defining a vision for 2029

In response to these challenges, Bensissaid collaborated closely with the Board members, other EMS Cooperative members and the EMS Unit at the International Bureau of the Universal Postal Union to develop a new strategic plan for the next cycle. Known as EMS Vision 2029, it focuses on: operational improvements, technological advances, and strengthening members' commitment to support EMS growth and sustainability. More importantly, the plan is rooted in the lived experiences and diverse realities of the Cooperative's 176 member operators.

In a world where speed, reliability and traceability have become fundamental requirements, EMS represents the ideal channel for positioning postal operators as leading logistics players. Bensissaid explained. "Its model, based on express delivery on a global scale, makes EMS a strategic asset to support the explosion in e-commerce exchanges."

He also stressed that customer needs are evolving rapidly. "This requires EMS services to be continually aligned with customer expectations, guaranteeing simplicity, innovation and responsiveness to market needs."

EMS Vision 2029 aims to respond to these expectations by creating a robust global EMS network that guarantees customer satisfaction and sustainable growth.

Bensissaid believes that "EMS Cooperative can act as a catalyst for the transformation across the postal sector by drawing on its robust international network, its know-how in fast logistics, and its capabilities and expertise accumulated over several decades".

"Its model, based on express delivery on a global scale, makes EMS a strategic asset to support the explosion in e-commerce exchanges."

Nabil Bensissaid

Chair of the EMS Cooperative Board and Director
General of Algeria's EMS operator

Innovation through collaboration

Some of those themes came into focus during the regional symposium in Chengdu, China held this year in May. Asia-Pacific operators who collectively account for over 70 percent of the global EMS volumes, shared innovations and strategies. Among these, Vietnam Post stood out for its customer-focused digital services and regional logistics expansion, including bulk shipment tools, real-time tracking via local messaging apps and new export hubs at Da Nang Airport. These initiatives reflect how EMS operators are increasingly innovating to meet customer expectations and sustain growth in a fast-changing market.

"It was more than a symposium," he recalled.
"It was an exchange of solutions."

These knowledge exchanges are emblematic of the Cooperative's broader transformation. Bensissaid is adamant that EMS must be both agile and inclusive.

Confronting global challenges with insights from the field

Throughout his tenure, Bensissaid has emphasized the importance of understanding and addressing the operational challenges EMS operators face daily. "EMS must play a leading role in the digitization of postal services. This means automating flows, seamlessly integrating data with predictable delivery times, and simplifying the user experience at every stage of the customer journey."

Bensissaid believes that "innovation should no longer be an option, but a necessity. This means investing in technological solutions, but also being agile and rethinking our internal processes."

Despite these hurdles, Bensissaid remains optimistic. While exact figures vary by region, he has observed signs of renewed energy across EMS networks. "We are seeing encouraging signs of growth and improvement. That tells me we are on the right path."

Preliminary data from 2025 indicates a modest but upward trend in EMS volumes around the world. Notably, several operators in Asia-Pacific, Africa and the Arab regions have reported positive momentum, with some countries experiencing growth rates exceeding 30 per cent. Europe and Latin America have also seen steady gains, reflecting a broader recovery and growing confidence in the market.

This optimism is underpinned by a growing belief that EMS can serve as a model for the wider transformation of the postal sector. With its emphasis on speed, reliability and global standards, EMS can help postal operators adapt to a world increasingly shaped by e-commerce and digital logistics.



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Bensissaid speaks from experience. In Algeria, EMS has undergone its own internal evolution under his leadership. His team introduced new digital tools and improved digital communication, strengthening customer trust in EMS services across the country.

But it was not just technology that made the difference. Bensissaid also prioritized employee engagement, launching new training and motivation initiatives, including internal efforts to acknowledge frontline staff who deliver outstanding customer service. "Empowered employees are key to performance," he said. "They are the ones delivering the promise of EMS."

Now, as Chair, he is applying those lessons across the EMS Cooperative. Under his leadership, regional engagement continues to identify local challenges and share practical solutions. What's more, several network-wide initiatives are under review, including the introduction of a new format of written proof of delivery (WPOD), diversification of delivery options, the RFID mailbag monitoring project (Edge for EMS), the introduction of a new delivery rate management mechanism, and the development of a new delivery category for e-commerce.

A shared future

With the EMS Cooperative General Assembly set to take place in Dubai during the Union's 28th Universal Postal Congress, Bensissaid believes the timing could not be better. "We are coming together at a time of renewed momentum."

Finally, Bensissaid asks all those involved in the EMS network to be optimistic about the future. "We are aware of the challenges faced every day, but all those obstacles must be overcome, as the EMS network

"EMS Cooperative can act as a catalyst for the transformation across the postal sector by drawing on its robust international network, its know-how in fast logistics, and its capabilities and expertise accumulated over several decades"

Nabil Bensissaid

Chair of the EMS Cooperative Board and Director General of Algeria's EMS operator

was built a long time ago, and it is the duty of all of us to preserve, protect and further develop the EMS Cooperative and promote it to our customers."

His message is simple and resolute. "The notion of EMS 'Cooperative' is grounded in the principle of cooperating as a network of members. That principle must guide our daily actions."

For him, cooperation is more than an operational model. It is a commitment to solidarity, shared learning and mutual growth. "We must continue to work as one. The future of EMS and of the global postal sector depends on it." **MH**



High-level EMS managers from 14 postal operators gathered in Chengdu, China, in May 2025 for the Asia-Pacific EMS Symposium.



FROM JAIPUR TO KINGSTON – FIVE POSTAL LEADERS FORUMS, ONE SHARED VISION

In the lead-up to the 28th Universal Postal Congress in Dubai, five regional Postal Leaders Forums provided space for bold leadership, regional focus, and global dialogue on the future of the postal sector.

Text by SONJA **DENOVSKI**

Between March and July 2025, the Universal Postal Union hosted a series of five high-level regional Postal Leaders Forums. Spanning Asia-Pacific, Africa, the Arab countries, Europe and the CIS, and Small Island Developing States (SIDS), each forum brought together postal executives, government officials, regulators, private sector innovators and international partners to address a rapidly evolving reality: the postal sector is no longer just about delivery. It is about change, inclusion, resilience and renewed relevance.

These forums, held ahead of the 28th Universal Postal Congress in Dubai, served as an opportunity to bring regional priorities to light, identify shared challenges, and strengthen global cooperation. UPU leadership took part in each forum, listening directly to regional perspectives and reinforcing the organization's commitment to partnership and dialogue. More importantly, they created space for honest conversation and leadership that is grounded in regional realities, united by a common goal, and committed to staying in step with a world that is moving quickly.

Asia-Pacific: strengthening the postal network

The series opened in Jaipur, India, from 19 to 21 March, where the Asia-Pacific Postal Leaders Forum convened under the theme "Strengthening the postal network". Hosted in partnership with India Post, this forum explored the role of South-South and triangular cooperation



Opening of the Africa Postal Leaders Forum



Opening of the Postal Leaders Forum for Arab Region in Doha, Qatar

The postal sector is no longer just about delivery. It is about change, inclusion, resilience and renewed relevance.

in sharing postal practices that work. It also examined the growing impact of postal financial services and the importance of enabling e-commerce through improved logistics and cross-border infrastructure.

India Post's digital transformation efforts, such as its digital address code and modernization roadmap, showed how careful planning based on real needs can bridge service gaps and bring institutions closer to citizens. The region demonstrated a clear readiness to test new ideas, built on shared expertise. The forum also emphasized the role of post offices in delivering essential public services, including identity verification and social welfare, especially in rural and underserved areas.

Asia-Pacific's experience underscored how regional cooperation, practical problem-solving and a willingness to test ideas can together shape the future of postal development.

Africa: rethinking regulation in a digital age

Held in Nairobi, Kenya, on 22 and 23 April, the Africa Postal Leaders Forum placed regulation at the heart of postal reform. Opening the event, UPU Director General Masahiko Metoki called for regulatory cooperation to keep pace with innovation. He emphasized that

multilateralism is not a principle of the past, but a necessity for the future.

Over two days, participants addressed issues ranging from informal delivery markets and cross-border oversight to the balance between competition and the delivery of universal service obligations. The forum also marked the launch of the Post4Health initiative in Kenya, a first national roll-out of this UPU project, undertaken in partnership with the Government of Kenya, to expand postal delivery of essential health projects. Other key sessions focused on how postal services can respond to growing demand for digital services, strengthen emergency response capacity, and promote greater alignment among national institutions.

The forum showed how postal services are taking on broader roles, from health logistics to digital services, while regulation evolves to keep pace. Collaboration and flexibility emerged as key strengths across the continent.

Arab countries: accelerating innovation in the parcel market

In Doha, Qatar, on 29 and 30 April, postal leaders from the Arab countries met under the theme "Accelerating

innovation in the parcel market to win in the age of e-commerce". With digital tools becoming more common, the forum looked at practical ways to improve parcel handling, such as faster processing systems, better tracking, and more flexible delivery methods that make the service easier for customers to use.

Panels explored ways to speed up operations, improve visibility for customers, and offer more flexible delivery options, all shaped by changing consumer habits. The forum also examined the postal sector's strategic role in implementing the Arab Digital Agenda. It showcased how collaboration between the public and private sectors, including initiatives such as the UPU–Islamic Development Bank postal finance partnership, can open new pathways for access to digital inclusion.

The region showed a clear commitment to adapting services to people's changing needs, improving both speed and accessibility. Postal leaders are working to balance commercial growth with broader service missions.



Europe and CIS: navigating e-commerce, innovation and supply chains

Baku, Azerbaijan, hosted the first-ever Europe and Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) Postal Leaders Forum from 13 to 15 May. Under the theme "Next horizons: navigating e-commerce, innovation and the supply chain for future excellence", the discussions focused on the growth of e-commerce, the resilience of supply chains, and the importance of cybersecurity. A special commemorative stamp was released during the forum, featuring Baku's skyline and symbols of modern logistics. It reflected Azerbaijan's ambition to become a regional hub for digital commerce and smart delivery infrastructure.

Speakers from academia, regulatory bodies and postal operators discussed scalable logistics models, new delivery approaches, and how to build trust in a fast-evolving digital economy. The sessions emphasized the need to modernize infrastructure, rely on practical information to make decisions, and strengthen cross-border partnerships.

For Europe and the CIS, the forum offered a glimpse into how longstanding institutions are adapting. The focus was on dependable systems, better coordination, and practical steps to serve people and businesses more effectively.



Europe and Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) Postal Leaders Forum



SIDS Postal Leaders Forum



Asia-Pacific Postal Leaders Forum

[Postal Leaders Forums] created space for honest conversations and leadership that is grounded in regional realities, united by a common goal, and committed to staying in step with a world that is moving quickly.

SIDS: building resilience, driving unity

The series concluded in Kingston, Jamaica, from 15 to 17 July, where the SIDS Postal Leaders Forum convened under the theme "Postal digitalization, integration and innovation: sustainable growth boosters for SIDS."

With more than 40 leaders from small island developing states in attendance, the forum tackled critical issues such as delivery disruptions, dependence on third-party carriers, and limited access to digital infrastructure. Discussions focused on transport agreements, digital service rollout, and improving resilience to external shocks.

The forum concluded with the Kingston Declaration, a shared pledge to strengthen cooperation, support new approaches and mobilize resources for inclusive postal development. For SIDS, the forum reinforced the notion that size is no barrier to influence. Island postal leaders spoke with one voice

about the need for stable connections, clear agreements and fair access to global systems. Discussions also underlined the importance of using the postal network as a delivery channel for essential government services, especially during crises or when traditional infrastructure is limited.

Towards Dubai: a global dialogue

Across all five forums, a few themes consistently emerged: change must work for everyone; regulation must enable progress, not inhibit it; the postal sector's future lies in its ability to adapt, serve and lead.

By anchoring global priorities in regional realities, the Postal Leaders Forum series has not only set the tone for the upcoming Congress in Dubai, but has also clarified the stakes. These are not parallel conversations. They are building blocks of a shared agenda.

As the 28th Universal Postal Congress approaches, the path forward is clear. If the sector is to stay relevant in a

If the sector is to stay relevant in a complex and competitive landscape, it must continue to listen, learn and lead together.

complex and competitive landscape, it must continue to listen, learn and lead together. The forums were not the final word; they were a call to action. Dubai is where these voices converge, and where the next phase of the global postal sector continues to evolve, built on the momentum, lessons and leadership forged throughout this forum series. **SD**

What the forums revealed

Across five regions, the Postal Leaders Forums confirmed a shared reality: the postal sector is changing, and it must keep up without losing its core purpose.

Post offices continue to serve as trusted access points, offering more than delivery. They verify identities, handle pensions, distribute health supplies, and act as public service hubs, especially in rural and remote areas.

Regulators are shifting their role, moving from gatekeepers to facilitators who ensure fair competition, protect universal service and adapt to new actors and models.

Financial inclusion, regional coordination and improved transport links are no longer long-term goals. They are already being implemented, shaping postal responsibilities and expectations today.

Even the smallest networks are setting examples. Island states, landlocked countries and smaller operators showed how clear priorities and creative partnerships can deliver real impact.

DESTINATION DUBAI



The 28th Universal Postal Congress in Dubai holds the promise of reimagining the postal sector to strengthen its role as a universal service provider to billions of people.

by KAYLA REDSTONE

The plenipotentiary meeting promises to be a pivotal moment for the postal sector, which has two choices ahead of it: face continued headwinds to remain the preferred channel for e-commerce growth or launch its own renaissance through bold choices.

While the UPU's latest data shows that the international postal network is serving more people than ever – 7.3 billion people in 2024, compared to 600 million in 1874, the year of the UPU's foundation – the UPU postal network is rapidly losing volumes.

The contrasting boom in the e-commerce market makes it clear: the UPU network is losing market share to better, faster, more reliable, more efficient service providers outside the UPU's network. Meanwhile, postal operators have been slow to adapt to regulatory changes, implement digital technology, test new delivery models, and meet a growing demand for sustainable services.

All of this has put pressure on the network's ability to meet its universal service obligations in jeopardy, as postal revenues fail to keep pace with global economic growth.

The issue is an existential one for the UPU, whose mission over the past century and half has been to stimulate the lasting development of efficient and accessible universal postal services of quality in order to facilitate communication between the inhabitants of the world.

The proposed solutions are elaborated in a raft of proposals developed over the past four years that will be decided in Dubai and executed throughout the next four-year cycle.

Defining a strategy

The draft UPU Strategy to be approved by the Congress sets the roadmap for how the organization will fulfil its mission in this new era. It is the result of extensive consultation with the full array of postal stakeholders – from postal operators, regulators and ministries to the wider postal sector.

"We set out to ensure the strategy development process was inclusive, transparent and member country driven," says Saleh Khan, who coordinates the UPU secretariat's Knowledge Centre and Think Tank, the group responsible for overseeing the development and implementation of the UPU Strategy and Dubai Business Plan.

This included collecting insights, ideas and feedback via the 2023 Strategy Summit, five virtual regional roundtables and six in-person Regional Strategy Forums, and a public global stakeholder survey.

These consultations yielded clear priorities for the UPU going forward.

"We set out to ensure the strategy development process was inclusive, transparent and member country driven."

Saleh Khan

Coordinator, UPU Knowledge Centre and Think Tank

A bold new vision for the UPU

A society that is interconnected, inclusive and sustainable, empowered by a seamless, innovative postal network.



Goal 1
Leverage the single postal territory through an effective rules-based system.

Goal 2
Strengthen the global postal ecosystem through innovation for facilitating communication and trade.

Goal 3
Enable postal development through enhanced cooperation and regionalization.

They highlighted the need to address decreasing international volumes, particularly those associated with cross-border e-commerce, by improving integration with e-commerce platforms and expanding their service offering to meet logistics demands. To combat rising operational costs, they suggested harnessing emerging technologies and climate resilient solutions to improve efficiency. Closer collaboration with wider postal sectors could lead to the development of new service opportunities, they proposed.

These inputs resulted in a bold new vision for the UPU: "A society that is interconnected, inclusive and sustainable, empowered by a seamless, innovative postal network".

That vision is supported by three goals the UPU should set out to achieve between 2026 and 2029:

1. To leverage the single postal territory through an effective rules-based system.
2. To strengthen the global postal ecosystem through innovation for facilitating communication and trade.
3. To enable postal development through enhanced cooperation and regionalization.

The underlying focus here is on getting the basics of postal services right – offering the right postal products, at the right price with a high quality of service that are connected through the right partners.

"Bringing e-commerce volumes into the network is a key aspect of the strategy. This is the biggest challenge we're facing as a Union," says Khan.

The goals are whittled down to specific proposals that will help drive the Union closer to its vision. Congress will be responsible for approving the UPU's work programme for the next four years – one which has had the extensive input of the UPU's Postal Operations Council (POC) and Council of Administration (CA).

A number of those proposals relate to three comprehensive, cycle-long roadmaps that strive to get the basics of the modern postal business right: the Integrated Product Plan, the Integrated Remuneration Plan and the Integrated Quality of Service Plan. Together,

“Bringing e-commerce volumes into the network is a key aspect of the strategy. This is the biggest challenge we’re facing as a Union”

Saleh Khan

Coordinator, UPU Knowledge Centre and Think Tank

these three plans strive to set the conditions for the modern, customizable, affordable and high-quality postal services that e-commerce customers expect in today’s environment.

Products for a new era

The Integrated Product Plan (IPP) that will be presented to the Congress lays the foundations for modernizing postal services so that they are aligned with e-commerce trends, customer demands and regulatory changes. It strives for a flexible, menu-driven service portfolio across letter post, parcel post, and EMS, ultimately leading to products that are fully customizable according to the needs of the end user.

This customization is increasingly important as e-commerce platforms turn to logistics partners that provide more visibility and a faster service on deliveries.

“The changes proposed by the IPP make it easier for the seller to meet their customers’ needs and result in a better experience for the recipient,” says Wendy Eitan, Director of E-Commerce and Physical Services Integration at the UPU.

“Today’s services are geared towards letters, but we know that with e-commerce we’re shifting more towards goods, and we know that goods require more value-added services,” she explains.

At the moment, international letters and parcels are subject to different value-added services. The IPP strives to harmonize those options for items containing goods, giving e-sellers and their customers the ability to

choose their services from a “menu” of options. The introduction of place-of-delivery options, new proof-of-delivery options, as well as a push towards offering delivery duty paid (DDP) services for items containing goods meet customers’ expectations.

The IPP also recommends mandatory tracking for items containing goods, giving customers more visibility on their items and helping to facilitate customs processes and clear items quicker. This will require the UPU to work on standards related to data capture and communication between postal operators.

While the IPP places additional requirements on designated postal operators, recommends the UPU provide capacity building support, including training, pilot projects and guides, to ensure the entire network can keep pace with the changes.

Money matters

A new approach to products necessitates adapted remuneration models that support the goal of keeping the universal service offered through the UPU network affordable and sustainable for both origin and destination designated operators. That, in a nutshell, was the main goal of the Integrated Remuneration Plan (IRP) which directed the work of the past four years, resulting in a proposed Integrated Remuneration System (IRS) containing the methodologies and remuneration rates for the period 2026-2030 to be reviewed at the Dubai Congress.

In line with the directions laid out in the IRP, the proposal for an IRS is directed towards establishing a fair, affordable, cost-based, and performance-incentivized remuneration system that helps keep the postal network competitive as a delivery provider. The changes it recommends are critical to attracting more volumes back to the UPU network.

Paulus Schoorl, manager of the UPU’s Policy and Regulatory Advisory Programme, explains that, in recent years, e-commerce platforms have turned to other delivery networks or new delivery business models – for example, direct injection, nearshoring or delivery from overseas warehouses in destination countries – to meet fast-changing consumer demands for higher quality, predictable delivery services and competitive prices.

“In developing the IRS, the first thing member countries started looking at was parcels remuneration – there hasn’t been a change to remunerating that category of mail in many years, but we now know there are more postal items are being transported in the parcels stream,” he says.

The proposals include a gradual phasing-out of the current inward land rates (ILR) system used for remunerating parcels, making room for remuneration rates that are increasingly based on the domestic tariffs applicable to similar domestic services, which become country-specific ceiling rates. The new remuneration system would allow for designated operators to self-declare remuneration rates below their ceiling rates, like the system that is already applied to letter-post items containing goods (small packets or E format).

In line with the changes proposed to postal products and to better reflect the actual costs of international mail handling and delivery of heavier items in the letter-post categories, the IRS proposes that letter-post items be increasingly remunerated based on their content (documents vs. goods), including the requirement to physically separate those items above a threshold of 15 tonnes. Above that same threshold, small packet items remuneration would then be based on the actual number of items. This is determined according to the reported number of items in electronic dispatch messages rather than sampling or worldwide averages.

“This will make the remuneration system more accurate and help ensure that UPU





rates cover handling and delivery costs and reduce the opportunities of remailing,” says Schoorl.

The proposed system ensures the right to affordable access to international postal services, by expressly addressing the special situation of low volume countries and those whose domestic reference tariffs are intentionally set low with social objectives in mind.

The IRS also proposes competitive performance-based remuneration for tracking to enhance customer and operational visibility of all barcoded postal items traveling through the postal network. Finally, the IRS proposes that parcels be subject to quality-linked remuneration, incentivizing reliable and predictable delivery and making the postal network an attractive delivery provider.

Quality boost

The organization’s plans for revolutionizing the quality of postal services go much deeper than quality-linked remuneration.

The Congress will also review a first-of-its-kind Integrated Quality of Service Plan (IQP) that is set to develop all dimensions of the UPU’s quality-of-service programme,

integrating approaches to measurement and improvement that enhance the reliability and customer centricity of postal services.

Looking at UPU data, it is evident that there is room to improve. Over the past four years, delivery times have increased for small packets and parcels. Small packets now take an average of two weeks to reach their destination. Parcel delivery times have nearly doubled, with the average parcel now taking more than five days on average to reach its recipient.

Regional disparities are also concerning. For example, customers in North America can expect an average end-to-end postal transit time of about two weeks, whereas customers in Africa experience a much longer wait, according to 2024 UPU data. Non-postal players delivered within one week in North America and Africa.

“When you look at delivery times, you can understand customers’ frustration,” says UPU Quality expert Dr. Julius Tsui. “This is why they’re choosing networks other than the post.”

The IQP sets out recommendations on two fronts. The first set of recommendations focuses on improving the reliability, visibility and predictability of international postal

Together, [the Integrated Product Plan, the Integrated Remuneration Plan and the Integrated Quality of Service Plan] strive to set the conditions for the modern, customizable, affordable and high-quality postal services that e-commerce customers expect in today’s environment.

services in the short term. This includes introducing additional mandatory scanning events throughout the postal supply chain – from six scans to twelve – to better predict delivery times and give customers visibility on their items.

In line with changes to the international postal product portfolio, the IQP will have the UPU focus on developing content-specific quality of service standards for items containing goods.

It will also integrate quality measurement for all postal products under a single methodology.

“We need to have a unified method of measuring this so we can have a proper overview,” explains Tsui.

The second set of recommendations establish a framework for the continuous evolution of quality improvement, prioritizing customer centricity and requirements of the changing market.

This includes conducting research and market analysis on customer pain points and emerging trends in order to help ensure that the UPU’s quality improvement efforts anticipate future needs to keep the postal network ahead of the curve.

Furthermore, a new innovative six-step framework – the Integrated Quality Management Model (IQMM) – introduced by the plan will ensure scalable and sustainable quality-of-service improvement, particularly in developing countries. It will be the basis of all future projects, assessing first delivery performance, then targeting gaps where action would yield the most significant results. The model offers UPU member countries access to tools, training and expertise to guide them in implementing their defined action plan. Continuous monitoring against KPIs identified in the national plan will help the UPU evolve the plan as necessary to address any new developments.

Finally, Certification will also be a motivator for continued improvement across the network. The plan proposes new KPIs for certification, leveraging the IQMM to drive countries to higher levels of certification.

Ensuring a sustainable and inclusive sector

One key issue to be addressed by the strategy is how the postal sector will contribute to global development goals over the next four years – the “inclusive” and “sustainable” part of the UPU’s proposed vision.

The Congress will review proposals in three principal areas: the sector’s transition to the green economy, the inclusion of women in postal services, and the development of inclusive postal payment and financial services.

During the 27th Congress in Abidjan, UPU member countries passed a resolution instructing the organization to investigate possible emission reduction targets and carbon-neutral cross-border services in the postal sector. It also encouraged knowledge sharing on emission reduction strategies, climate finance and climate adaptation.

Two years later, in 2023, the Riyadh Extraordinary Congress approved a “green package” outlining voluntary climate action targets for the postal sector and establishing a framework for climate action, focusing on mitigation, adaptation and climate finance, supported by a dedicated climate facility.

The 28th Congress will review further proposals to support the climate finance-related activities. If taken forward, the proposed actions will enable the UPU to mobilize and channel climate funding from outside the sector, facilitate knowledge sharing, and promote partnerships and policy incentives to support designated postal operators, governments, and other postal sector players in accelerating a voluntary low-emission and energy-resilient transition. This will ensure postal operators can continue to provide essential postal services that are financially sustainable and meet the needs of e-commerce platforms and customers who expect sustainable options.

The Congress will also review proposals that further work on the Abidjan Congress’ resolution to ensure the inclusion of women in the postal sector. During the cycle, the UPU produced a Policy on Gender Equality aligned with UN best practices. Proposals



A new innovative six-step framework – the Integrated Quality Management Model (IQMM) – introduced by the plan will ensure scalable and sustainable quality-of-service improvement, particularly in developing countries.

going forward to the Dubai Congress build upon this work, suggesting measurements for gender capacity across the sector and elaborating capacity building strategies.

Member countries will also review proposed changes to the UPU Acts that will see financial services other than postal payments services included in the international framework for postal financial services. This includes services such as insurance and microfinances, as well as further digitization of payment and financial services providing more people globally with access to a range of affordable financial services through the post's expansive network. The proposals also aim to expand this network even further by developing interconnection with wider postal sector players thus creating a network of networks.

All players on board

Engagement with wider postal sector players has become an even more critical focus of the UPU's work, especially over the past four years following the 2023 Extraordinary Congress' decision to enhance cooperation across the entire sector.

Increased engagement with the WPSP has been carried out via the UPU's Consultative Committee – the UPU body representing the interest of the wider sector and facilitating dialogue between the wider sector and UPU members – as well as a new user subsidiary body meant to focus on the interoperability of postal networks with the wider sector. This body is now known as the Ready-to-Market Interoperability Group (RMIG).

The upcoming Congress will decide on a proposal that strives to better define the roles of the two bodies, establish a mechanism for their collaboration and optimize resources to avoid unnecessary duplication in work.

Another proposal would expand the Consultative Committee's mandate, giving it more leeway to drive projects. It also seeks to expand the RMIG's mandate, giving it responsibility for all operational, commercial, technical and economic aspects related to interoperability between designated postal operators and wider postal sector players.

Adapting to regional needs

During consultations on the UPU's strategy for 2026-2029, member countries made a resounding call for increased regionalization of UPU activities.

This reflects the UPU's push to expand the organization's reach in the regions during the previous work cycle, explains Mutua Muthusi, Director of Development Cooperation at the UPU. Over the previous four years, the UPU expanded its regional presence from seven offices to fourteen, staffed by 15 regional expert consultants. The offices were established with nearly CHF 1 million in in-kind support from 14 host member countries.

The Congress is expected to review and determine a new Development Cooperation Policy for 2026-2029 that pitches several strategies to bolster the quality of regional interventions.

"Member countries want strong offices, with reliable staff, more activities and more access to the UPU in their regions. This iteration of the Development Cooperation Policy responds to that demand," says Muthusi.

The new policy proposes a comprehensive framework for project management that includes all key players in the postal supply chain – from governments, postal regulators, postal operators and restricted postal unions to wider postal sector players – to drive project outcomes.

While the approach gives priority to activities for least developed countries, small island developing states and land-locked developing countries, all countries will be

able to benefit from closer access to the UPU's expertise, its drive to establish inter- and intra-regional partnerships and the network improvement outcomes it seeks to achieve over the next four years.

"This policy highlights that development cooperation is not only technical assistance for developing countries – all countries can benefit from these activities," he adds. **KR**

"The changes proposed by the The Integrated Product Plan (IPP) make it easier for the seller to meet their customers' needs and result in a better experience for the recipient."

Wendy Eitan

Director, UPU E-Commerce and Physical Services Integration



Learn more about the topics being discussed this 8-19 September at the 28th Universal Postal Congress in Dubai, United Arab Emirates

www.upu.int/en/Universal-Postal-Union/About-UPU/Bodies/Congress





Writing the world: how the International Letter-Writing Competition inspires young minds in Botswana and beyond ✨

For over five decades, the UPU's International Letter-Writing Competition has provided millions of children the opportunity to spark their creativity and express their views on world issues.

Text by **KAYLA REDSTONE**



The 54th edition of the competition asked young people to imagine themselves as the ocean and write a letter explaining how others could help take good care of them. The competition garnered 1.61 million entries from 65 countries, including Botswana, which more than doubled participation in its national competition this year.

A flagship advocacy initiative of the UPU since 1971, International Letter-Writing Competition (ILWC) seeks to promote literacy among young people worldwide via the postal network.

In recent years, the UPU has engaged with UN partners to expand the competition's reach and mission, encouraging young people to express their views on current issues being discussed on the world stage.

The 2025 competition is organized in partnership with the International Maritime Organization (IMO) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) under the theme "Imagine you are the ocean. Write a letter to someone explaining why and how they should take good care of you."

To increase the competition's reach, the three partners worked in sync to reach out to key stakeholders, promote the competition in unison across social media, and define an astute high-level panel of judges.



2025 theme of the International Letter-Writing Competition: Imagine you are the ocean. Write a letter to someone explaining why and how they should take good care of you.

"This wasn't just about literacy – it was about making sure every child felt heard, valued, and part of a greater story."

Gofhaone Bino Merafhe

BotswanaPost Stakeholder Relations Manager

Although the winners of this year's competition have yet to be announced, it is clear the campaign gained traction with young people worldwide: 65 countries sent letters to be judged by the UPU's international jury in 2025, compared to 50 in 2024, with more than 1.6 million children participating in the national heats.

Member countries are also employing new strategies to reinvigorate interest in the competition and engage youth in their furthest reaches. One example is Botswana.

Botswana's rebranding strategy

Botswana has participated in the UPU's ILWC consistently over the past three years after a brief break from the competition. BotswanaPost Stakeholder Relations Manager, Gofhaone Bino Merafhe, says the postal operator rejoined the competition to advance literacy, creativity and youth communication skills.

However, the initial relaunch in 2023 didn't draw the participation the post was hoping to achieve, with only 77 letters submitted that year. The 2024 competition saw a slight increase in participation, with 86 children submitting letters.

To attract more young Botswana writers from all regions and to revive young people's interest in postal services in general, the operator decided to rebrand the competition in 2025 under its "Kwala Tempa Posa" (Write, Stamp, Post It) initiative.

"Through the Kwala Tempa Posa initiative, BotswanaPost deliberately reconnects students with pen, paper, and stamps, reminding them that heartfelt thoughts preserved in ink and delivered by post possess a unique and timeless power," Merafhe explains.

The project expanded the scope of the competition, involving the launch of new partnerships to improve its organization, the use of new platforms to promote it and finding new ways to engage young people.

Strengthened partnership

To organize the national competition, BotswanaPost relied on close cooperation with the country's Ministry of Child Welfare and Basic Education, the Independent Schools Association of Botswana, and The Broadcasters Organization, a youth-led non-governmental organization that works to engage youth on literacy, media, ICT and gender issues.

The Ministry of Child Welfare and Basic Education ensured outreach to all public schools across the country through official channels, including its Regional Education Offices.

"Regional Offices are strategically placed across the country, therefore ensuring access even in rural and remote areas, guaranteeing that no child is left behind," Merafhe explains, adding that the Ministry's outreach included letters, posters and direct coordination with educators. They ensured teachers were prepared to guide their students in preparing their submissions.

"Schools in regions like the Central, North-East, and Kgalagadi districts invited kids to pen their thoughts, with help from teachers guiding them through the letter-writing theme. This wasn't just about literacy – it was about making sure every child felt heard, valued, and part of a greater story," she says.

Independent Schools Association ensured similar outreach was extended to pupils studying in private schools.

The Broadcasters Organization helped ensure a broader community outreach through their Destiny Shapers school programme focused on sharpening young learners' skills. The platform helped disseminate information about the competition, taking advantage of the "month of children in broadcasting" in March to interact with children and encourage their participation.



The winners of Botswana's 2025 National Letter-Writing Competition: Nelly Digwaamaje, Annah Rose Bagopi, and Osego Egnah Maswe

Qualified teachers in the organization who also grade Botswana's national exams helped refine the adjudication process. They ensured the judging panel was complete with language and media experts to ensure a fair and rigorous evaluation of the letters received.

"We are looking forward to seeing more numbers because interest has now increased, we want to see more schools in remote areas taking part in the International Letter-Writing Competition," adds Layani Ellias, Director of The Broadcasters Organization's Botswana Chapter.

Reaching digital natives

While the written letter remains a valuable traditional form of communication, Merafhe stresses the important role new media played in reaching young people across the country.

In previous years, the Post focused on sending letters, placing local newspaper advertisements and using the Ministry's Regional Offices to conduct its promotion. However, this year it also turned to organic and paid social media tactics to ensure

young people and their families had access to this opportunity. According to the Post, Facebook was the most successful platform, reaching more than 190,700 Facebook users with 502,300 post views. The Broadcasters Organization also promoted the competition on its social media channels.

The revived campaign was extremely successful. Botswana's promotional efforts led to a 252% increase in participation in 2025, with 300 letters being submitted to BotswanaPost.

Moreover, the Post's goal of reaching children in rural areas was also successful, as the winners of the 2025 competition hailed from rural villages rather than urban centres.

"This outcome highlights the broad national reach of the initiative and demonstrates that learners in rural areas are equally capable of excelling, despite the typically greater access to advanced learning opportunities found in urban centres," she says.

Moving forward, as part of the broader Kwala Tempa Posa initiative, BotswanaPost will continue to encourage Post Office tour visits from learners and explore partnership

For posts thinking of launching the competition for the first time, Merafhe underscores the vital role of partnerships to ensure its success, boost its inclusivity and use the competition as an opportunity to unite young people across the nation.

How the ILWC works



At the end of each year, the UPU announces the theme of the following year's competition and invites member countries to participate.

Member countries can organize their national competition as they see fit. This often includes a collaboration between the country's national postal operator and the ministry of education to circulate information about the competition to schools. Countries convene their own national jury and select one finalist to participate in the UPU's International Letter-Writing Competition. The competition is open to young people up to 15 years of age.

The UPU's international jury panel evaluates all letters according to their structure, adherence to the theme, creativity and use of language and selects three finalists.

Finalists are typically invited by the UPU to receive their awards as part of the UPU's World Post Day celebration on 9 October. However, this year's finalists will be invited to receive their awards in September at the UPU's 28th Universal Postal Congress in Dubai, United Arab Emirates.

opportunities with the government and other organizations to promote literacy and postal services.

"This initiative aims to teach students about design, history, and communication, creating young stamp lovers and preserving a key part of Botswana's postal heritage," she explains.

Advice to newcomers

Reflecting on the competition's success, Merafhe says that in the Post will continue to engage with more schools and leverage digital platforms to organize and promote the competition.

"This competition reminds us of the timeless value of letter writing and the powerful stories youth carry within them," Merafhe muses.

"Botswana remains committed to growing the competition and using it to drive literacy, creativity, and expression among its future leaders."

For posts thinking of launching the competition for the first time, Merafhe underscores the vital role of partnerships to ensure its success, boost its inclusivity and use the competition as an opportunity to unite young people across the nation.

"Inclusivity remains central ensuring that both urban and rural learners have access to information and opportunities to participate," Merafhe adds. "Ultimately, this transforms the competition into a national pride initiative, beyond just a postal activity." **KR**

Learn more about the rules and how to participate:

<https://www.upu.int/en/universal-postal-union/outreach-campaigns/international-letterwriting-competition-for-young-people>







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PIONEERING ACCESS: BUILDING RAILROADS TO RURAL INDIA

India is a vast and diverse country, with over 800 million people living in rural areas. Yet, one of its biggest engines of economic growth – logistics – has long faced a serious challenge in reaching these regions. While urban consumers increasingly benefit from fast e-commerce delivery, many remote regions remain underserved by traditional supply chains.

Text by ROBERT **KODINGO** and MAKIKO **HAYASHI**



Pune-based startup ElasticRun is changing this narrative. Co-founded by Sandeep Deshmukh, Shitiz Bansal and Saurabh Nigam, the company was built on the belief that access should not be tied to geography.

It has developed a rural-first supply chain built on a crowdsourced logistics model. This strategy was not just about differentiation but resilience, scale and relevance in a deeply fragmented country. At the heart of this approach are India's ubiquitous kirana shops – independent corner stores – transformed into nodes of a tech-enabled, hyperlocal delivery network. While most logistics providers have focused on high-volume urban markets, ElasticRun identified untapped potential in India's vast rural economy, and designed a platform that reaches where traditional infrastructure often cannot.

ElasticRun is not only a technology success story but also a case study in social inclusion, economic empowerment and digital transformation rolled into one.

As traditional logistics models are challenged by rapid technological shifts, innovative solutions are needed to keep them relevant and resilient. Postal networks around the world are at a critical juncture, facing rising demand for last-mile delivery, digital integration and financial sustainability.

Sandeep Deshmukh, CEO and Co-Founder of ElasticRun, believes this is precisely where technology can play a transformative role.

"We would like to enable postal networks with our technology, which empowers them to run stable operations, open up new revenue streams, as well as bring social inclusion in their markets," he said.

A crowdsourced model built for reach

ElasticRun's journey began with a clear premise: if rural markets are hard to reach, the solution is not to shrink ambition but to stretch the supply chain. Rather than invest in capital-heavy infrastructure, the company built an asset-light, decentralized network powered by technology and local entrepreneurship.

Its platform orchestrates a distributed workforce of solo entrepreneurs, local vehicle owners, and small business operators to form a coordinated delivery and commerce network. When the platform was extended to serve fast-moving consumer goods brands, it enabled national suppliers to distribute into deep rural areas without the need to establish physical depots. At the same time, kirana shops gained more efficient access to a wider range of products. This decentralized model, powered by a modular and battle-tested tech stack, now performs at six sigma levels.

At its core is an AI-driven control tower that monitors operations in real time, flags anomalies before they escalate, and automates everything from route planning to fraud prevention. A task execution engine atomizes and assigns operations as micro-jobs, enabling agile, responsive logistics without fixed assets. Its workforce ecosystem tools manage gig workforce across the full lifecycle, right from onboarding to upskilling and payouts.

This approach has enabled ElasticRun to deliver at scale while maintaining affordability and reliability. Today, the platform handles more than 200 million parcels every month, with a delivery closure rate of 99.96% – without owning a single truck or warehouse.

Scaling commerce and inclusion

ElasticRun's model does more than deliver goods; it connects rural India to formal supply chains, creating new avenues for commerce and inclusion. Through its

ElasticRun's journey began with a clear premise: if rural markets are hard to reach, the solution is not to shrink ambition but to stretch the supply chain.

"We would like to enable postal networks with our technology, which empowers them to run stable operations, open up new revenue streams, as well as bring social inclusion in their markets."

Sandeep Deshmukh

CEO and Co-Founder of ElasticRun, Member of the UPU Consultative Committee

partnerships with banks and non-banking financial companies, the platform uses transaction-level data to assess creditworthiness and embed microfinance directly into the supply chain.

In many communities, women-run kirana stores had been excluded from vital financial services and opportunities. Today, ElasticRun is helping change that. More than 100,000 hours of training have already been delivered through its digital platform, empowering women to manage their businesses independently.

For Sharda Santosh Shinde, a store owner in a remote village, the support came when she needed it most. After her husband's accident left her without family or financial security, ElasticRun enabled her to restock her shop with ease and continue earning a livelihood. "They would deliver stock to us hassle-free and at a great discount", she recalled.

A local solution, a global blueprint

ElasticRun's success offers a powerful lesson for postal operators worldwide, particularly those seeking to extend reach, modernize operations, and remain relevant in the age of e-commerce. While many Posts still



Colleagues at the July Townhall – “Leading the Way with Sandeep.”

depend on fixed infrastructure and centralized delivery systems, ElasticRun has demonstrated the potential of digital-first, data-driven logistics.

By integrating predictive control systems, gig workforce models and decentralized planning, postal operators can reduce their cost-to-serve, improve delivery times, and unlock new sources of revenue even in low-density areas.

Postal operators already have physical reach and trust. By activating new network layers and expanding their service portfolios such as quick-commerce, retail, credit and distribution, Posts can unlock new growth opportunities. With access to battle-tested technology, they can multiply revenue streams while maintaining operational efficiency. This scalable technology will also enable Posts to transform accessibility with deep reach in underserved areas.

This approach can help Posts build flexible and scalable parcel networks, while strengthening their social impact.

A platform for partnership

Now a member of the UPU Consultative Committee, ElasticRun views its engagement with the postal community as a springboard for broader collaboration. The company's strategic priorities include enabling Posts to diversify income, optimize last-mile delivery, and extend digital services using ElasticRun's proven platform.

Its technology can enable postal operators to launch differentiated services without significant upfront capital expenditure, unlocking rapid innovation and unmatched operational efficiency.

Beyond improving logistics, ElasticRun aims to contribute to inclusive growth by creating local employment, expanding financial access, and supporting underserved communities.

In a world where digital transformation and inclusion must go hand in hand, ElasticRun is building the next generation of infrastructure – not just to move goods but to unlock possibility. **RK&MH**

Its technology can enable postal operators to launch differentiated services without significant upfront capital expenditure, unlocking rapid innovation and unmatched operational efficiency.

UPU's AI push boosts global postal collaboration and innovation

Back in 2023, the UPU's State of the Postal Sector Report identified artificial intelligence (AI) as a "beacon of hope" for the international postal industry.

Text by HELEN NORMAN

The report explored how the technology can be used for more than just automation and efficiency gains. AI presents an opportunity for hyper-collaboration between multiple ecosystemic stakeholders, ushering in a new era of sustainable postal development and helping to rectify the imbalances in both national and international postal development.

"International postal services can only succeed with AI if they intensify data sharing between them and with all their transportation and cross-border e-commerce partners," said UPU economist José Anson. "We call this "hyper-collaboration" in the international postal sector."

The transformation potential of AI has not gone unnoticed by the postal industry, with many operators around the world looking at how they can embrace the technology for optimized routing, real-time tracking, and personalized services.

"AI will increasingly support the establishment of digital twins throughout the entire postal supply chain and processes," Anson continued. This will become a game-changer in terms of increased efficiencies in a time when postal services and other logistics operators struggle to maintain their profit margins."

Anson believes that "an agile mindset and organization" is essential when seeking to capitalize on AI. He also stresses that posts "must act now" when it comes to AI and that they should test "as many use cases as possible" to find the best ones.

"International postal services can only succeed with AI if they intensify data sharing between them and with all their transportation and cross-border e-commerce partners."

José Anson
UPU economist

The UPU has been working on several AI innovations in recent years, developed to support its members and their customers. These include the use of AI in its Global Track and Trace (GTT) system, AI to detect dangerous and counterfeit goods, and for stamp identification.

Global Track and Trace

The GTT system, which provides international routing information of postal items for operators and e-commerce platforms worldwide, now includes a prediction engine that uses machine learning models trained on postal big data to predict estimated delivery days.





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"UPU GTT is used in many countries all around the world," said Silviu Lita, Software Architect at the UPU. "Currently, it gets about 1-2 million hits per day." The system has been extremely successful over the years, however, the provision of reliable information on the expected delivery date of a postal item has been a challenge, especially for postal operators in the least developing, developing countries and small island developing states.

But now, using years of postal big data, the new engine can estimate delivery days with surprising accuracy. "It uses our big data environment to train a machine learning model," said Lita. "Then it uses the trained model to predict the delivery. The prediction is re-evaluated as new events are captured for a mail item."

Talking about the accuracy of the new tool, Lita continues, "The prediction accuracy varies. It's lower at the time the item is posted – about 61% – but it improves significantly, reaching 91% once the item is released from inbound customs."

Developed entirely in-house, the AI module (Global Track and Trace system) represents a major technological milestone for the UPU. Posts can either embed the GTT interface into their websites or access the prediction engine through an API.

Dangerous Goods Search Tool

The UPU is also embracing AI in the development of its new Dangerous Goods Search Tool (DGST), which is an AI-powered system that can detect high-risk items in the global postal system.

"The DGST is currently undergoing structured User Acceptance Testing (UAT) with 40 designated postal operators worldwide," said Dawn Wilkes, Security Program Manager at the UPU. "This phase is critical – it allows us to test how well the AI identifies dangerous goods using real data from international mail events and customs declarations."

The DGST calculates a Dangerous Goods Prediction Score (DGPS) for each item, using machine learning models trained on vast postal datasets. "It processes EDI messages like ITMATT and EMSEVT in near real time and returns a score through an API," Wilkes explained.

"Operators can then take appropriate action based on that risk assessment."

The tool will also become smarter over time. "We will retrain the model regularly – every three months or so – to improve its accuracy," Wilkes added. "The more data it ingests, the more intelligent it becomes. That's why we encourage posts to authorize data access – it's a win-win."

But the UPU isn't stopping there. "One of our key goals is to integrate DGST with external intelligence sources," said Wilkes. "We're exploring secure data-sharing partnerships with customs, UN agencies, and national enforcement bodies to cross-reference flagged items with known threats, such as blacklisted senders or high-risk trade routes."

Set for broader rollout by late 2025, DGST promises to revolutionize mail security. "Ultimately, it gives posts a powerful tool to protect employees, cut costs, and ensure compliance," Wilkes concluded. "This is about future-proofing the global postal network."

Stamp identification and counterfeit usage

Security is also at the heart of the UPU's World Association for the Development of Philately Numbering System (WNS) app, which functions as a mobile extension of the WNS website – UPU's authoritative stamp database since its inception in 2002. Dubbed WNS 2.0, the AI-powered mobile app enables instant stamp identification and combats global counterfeiting.

"This app is a game-changer for the philatelic community," said Benjamin Combes, Manager of the UPU's Philately Development and Documentary Heritage Programme. "It offers customs and law enforcement a new tool to fight counterfeiting, encourage in rebuilding trust between posts and collectors, and make stamp information easily accessible to everyone."

The WNS app draws from an early database of more than 120,000 officially verified stamps for now. Using AI, users simply take a photo of a stamp to access detailed metadata in seconds, replacing magnifying glasses and catalogs with a smartphone. "With the WNS app, users can identify a stamp instantly. For collectors, it's an incredible leap forward," Combes said.

"We're exploring secure data-sharing partnerships with customs, UN agencies, and national enforcement bodies to cross-reference flagged items with known threats, such as blacklisted senders or high-risk trade routes."

Dawn Wilkes

UPU Security Program Manager

Beyond collectors, posts stand to benefit significantly. "Counterfeiting costs the postal world millions," Combes explained. "The WNS app helps verify authenticity by cross-checking stamps against our trusted database." Therefore, customs agents can use the app to inspect stamps without repeatedly contacting postal authorities, streamlining border checks.

Importantly, WNS 2.0 brings stamp collecting into the digital age. "If it's not on their phone, it doesn't exist for the younger generation," Combes said. Future updates will include social sharing, real-time market values, and broader language support. "WNS 2.0 is just the beginning," Combes concluded. "We're building a smart, global philatelic platform for the future."

The future of AI

While the UPU continues to work on groundbreaking new AI-based tools to support its members, and encourage hyper-collaboration, Anson believes that there are still many underexplored areas when it comes to AI.

He concluded: "For example, agentic AI – the kind of AI that moves organizations from automated to autonomous processes and optimizes operations, will be the next wave of AI innovation in the postal sector and will show the real value proposition of AI for postal companies." **HN**



Cooperation as a path through postal regulation, competition and digital change

The volume of letters processed by La Poste Groupe has fallen by 70% over the past 18 years. At the same time, parcel volumes, driven in part by e-commerce, have risen sharply. These developments are not only a challenge for the French postal operator, but reflect a global trend.

Text by **FABIENNE BLASER**

How can postal operators respond to these changing user behaviours while continuing to ensure seamless, cost-efficient communication between citizens? To discuss these questions and share best practices, twenty directors of African postal operators met at La Poste's headquarters in Paris from 15 to 17 April 2025 for a triangular exchange organized by La Poste and the UPU.

Navigating change and regulation as shared challenges in the postal sector

Particularly lively discussions followed a presentation on the liberalization and regulation of network industries by La Poste's Director of Regulation and Studies. In many countries, postal services have long been considered classical state monopolies tasked with ensuring affordable communication nationwide. The absence of competition has often slowed innovation and the development of new services. Gradual liberalization has sought to remedy this, but also requires state regulation, as markets alone cannot safeguard all public interests. Many national postal operators today view state-imposed obligations as increasingly burdensome: they must reconcile their public service mission with the need for economic sustainability, despite the fact that traditional postal products such as letter mail are in sharp decline.

Participants noted that Posts are confronted not only with regulatory constraints, but also with increasing competition from global tech platforms and new digital players, often without the same regulatory responsibilities or public service obligations as national Posts.



Philippe Wahl, CEO of La Poste Groupe, opens the triangular exchange in Paris.

Several participants shared that postal concerns are often neglected by political decision-makers in their countries. Regulatory bodies tend to focus on telecommunications, while the challenges faced by postal operators receive little attention. In some cases, this neglect even takes concrete form, as representatives of certain countries reported being forced to vacate their premises in favour of other departments considered more important by their governments.

At the same time, discussions also turned to the new competitive pressures facing postal operators, particularly in the area of financial services. Participants noted that Posts are confronted not only with regulatory constraints, but also with increasing competition from global tech platforms and new digital players offering payment services, identity solutions or insurance, often without the same regulatory responsibilities or public service obligations as national Posts.

Hybrid and digital models as key strategies for adapting change

Some of the solutions presented in Paris illustrated how postal operators can navigate these tensions. La Poste demonstrated how it meets regulatory obligations, such as territorial coverage, through increasingly flexible approaches, but without compromising the universal service. This includes hybrid partnership models with businesses or public authorities such as

“Point La Poste” (postal counters integrated into partner businesses, equipped with self-service terminals), France Service and digital advisory teams that ensure nationwide access to digital and administrative services.

La Poste also showed how digitalization can serve as an instrument for adapting to a changing sector. Topics included the development of instant payment systems, mobile payments and interoperable solutions, as well as strategies for meeting new regulatory requirements. These digital innovations not only improve efficiency, but also help safeguard the relevance of postal operators in competition with major tech platforms and fintechs.

One particularly illustrative example of digital innovation is Digiposte, a digital service for sharing, archiving and managing documents electronically and securely. Operated by Docaposte, La Poste’s subsidiary for trusted digital services, Digiposte functions as a secure digital vault for citizens, where personal documents can be stored and managed long-term. In addition to this personal use, La Poste offers certified archiving solutions for legally binding documents such as electronic registered mail, digital contracts or official records required by authorities and businesses. These documents are securely archived for 10 years in compliance with applicable regulations, and can serve as valid legal proof in disputes. This service

addresses a key need in digital transition: to replace the loss of traditional paper records with secure digital alternatives while ensuring legal certainty. Among the African postal directors, who repeatedly voiced their desire for trustworthy, standardized digital solutions, this model was perceived as particularly relevant.

However, these advancements are not without their limitations: both in France and in African countries, a significant proportion of the population remains digitally excluded. Digital inclusion is therefore essential to make these solutions accessible to customers, as they can only help address the challenges of changing conditions in the postal sector if they are actually used.

The event in Paris provided a vivid example of triangular and South-South cooperation with tangible benefits for both sides.

The African directors expressed their appreciation of the diversity of solutions presented and the openness of the exchanges. Particularly valuable was not only the focus on technologies and best practices, but also the shared reflection on political realities, systemic limitations and feasibility. This open dialogue on structural barriers, national specificities and regulatory challenges was described by many participants as being enriching. For La Poste, too, the exchange proved fruitful: these personal encounters help foster mutual understanding, strengthen relations with African postal operators, and offer valuable insights for the further development of their own digital solutions. Moreover, encounters like this generate synergies and strengthen the postal community at a time of profound change. **FB**

The event in Paris provided a vivid example of triangular and South-South cooperation with tangible benefits for both sides.

WNS 2.0: A game-changing tool for the philatelic industry

The Universal Postal Union (UPU) is rolling out a new AI-based philatelic tool, which is set to revolutionize stamp collecting globally, while enabling postal operators to protect revenues and combat counterfeiting. The World Association for the Development of Philately Numbering System (WNS) mobile application provides stamp collectors, posts, and even customs agents with a powerful smartphone application that is transforming the way stamps are identified, catalogued, and protected.

Text by HELEN NORMAN

According to Benjamin Combes, Manager of the UPU's Philately Development and Documentary Heritage Programme, the free-to-download WNS app is not only a step forward for the philatelic community but also a key tool for driving revenue within the postal sector. "The app provides a new tool to fight against counterfeiting, to rebuild trust between the posts and the public/collectors, and to make the data/information about stamps available to all," he said.

A new era for philately

For collectors, the WNS app provides an easy and reliable way to identify stamps from a growing database that currently includes more than 120,000 stamps, all verified and sourced directly from the postal authorities that issue them. "Before the app, identifying a stamp required catalogues, magnifying glasses, and often a lot of time and effort. With the WNS app, users can

scan a stamp using their smartphone and have all the relevant information in seconds," said Combes. "This is an incredible leap forward, and for collectors, it's a game-changer."

The app, which was developed in collaboration with Deutsche Post subsidiary Pixo Analytics GmbH, functions as a mobile extension of the WNS website, which has been UPU's authoritative stamp database since its inception in 2002. Now, using AI technology, collectors can upload a photo of any stamp, and the app will quickly match it with the detailed metadata in the database, including features like perforation patterns, paper type, and stamp size. The result is an instant, accurate identification of the stamp, making the process of identifying and verifying stamps more efficient than ever before.

Combating counterfeiting

For postal operators, the WNS app serves as a vital tool in the fight against stamp counterfeiting, a growing issue that costs the

"Every post that participates in the WNS system is not only promoting their own stamps but also indirectly promoting stamps from other countries. It's a global cooperative effort that benefits everyone."

Benjamin Combes

Manager, UPU's Philately Development and Documentary Heritage Programme



postal sector millions of dollars annually. "Counterfeiting is a major issue for the postal world, and the WNS app adds another layer of protection against forgeries," Combes explained. The AI-powered authentication system allows customs, postal security and law enforcement agents to cross-check stamps against the WNS database to verify their authenticity, using features such as design, colour, size and other security characteristics. This functionality is critical for postal operators looking to protect their revenue and reduce fraud.

The app also supports customs agents and law enforcement in identifying counterfeit stamps, providing a simple yet effective solution to a problem that can have widespread financial consequences. Combes stressed that the app allows customs agents to verify stamps during their routine

inspections, reducing the number of calls they need to make to the postal authorities. "For posts, this app is the perfect solution. It allows them to be proactive in supporting customs and reducing the need for constant interaction with regulators," he added.

Unlocking new revenue streams

The WNS app also offers postal operators a unique opportunity to promote their products globally. Traditionally, posts have struggled to market their stamps internationally, but the WNS database changes that by offering worldwide visibility at no additional cost. "The app makes stamps accessible to collectors and the public across the globe in a matter of seconds. Posts can promote their products to a global audience without spending significant amounts of money on advertising," Combes noted.

By bringing stamp collecting into the digital age, the WNS app makes it more accessible to a younger generation that may not have been previously interested in traditional stamp collecting.

For postal operators, the WNS app offers an additional benefit: it enables posts to tap into the global philatelic market. "Stamps are one of the most collectible items in the world, and posts have a significant opportunity to generate revenue from collectors both domestically and internationally," said Combes. "Selling stamps to collectors, especially those abroad, is a way for posts to generate revenue from products that will never be used for postage."

The app's integration with the WNS database allows posts to directly showcase their stamp collections to the world, giving them a platform to promote and sell their products without incurring the high costs of international marketing campaigns. By making stamps visible in the WNS app, posts can directly reach collectors, hobbyists, and investors worldwide. Moreover, the app's inclusion of e-commerce links means users can easily purchase stamps they discover through the app, creating a seamless connection between discovery and transaction.

Appealing to a younger generation

One of the most exciting aspects of the WNS app, according to Combes, is its potential to attract a younger audience to the world of philately. "We know that every customer under the age of 20, if it's not on their smartphone, it doesn't exist for them,"



Combes said. By bringing stamp collecting into the digital age, the WNS app makes it more accessible to a younger generation that may not have been previously interested in traditional stamp collecting.

In addition, the UPU plans to incorporate features that will further enhance the app's appeal to younger users. For example, Combes hinted at future updates that will enable users to share their favourite stamps directly on social media. "This will allow users to not only discover new stamps but also engage with their networks, sparking more interest in stamp collecting," he added.

The future of the WNS app

While the current version of the WNS app is already a major improvement over the previous web-based platform, Combes emphasized that this is only the beginning. "This is WNS 2.0, and there's much more to come," he explained. Soon, the app will support additional languages, making it accessible to users in every country. The team has also started to engage in discussions with the secondary market stakeholders to explore ways of introducing features that would enable users to track the real-time value of their stamps – helping collectors identify rare and valuable items in their collections.

Looking further ahead, Combes sees the app evolving into an essential tool for not only collectors and postal operators but also e-commerce platforms. "We are considering the opportunity to develop a digital interface, known as an API, that would help e-commerce platforms – including the largest online marketplaces – to filter out counterfeit stamps and ensure that only genuine products are being sold," he explained.

The power of cooperation

At its core, the WNS app is about cooperation, Combes noted. "The UPU is based on cooperation, and the WNS app embodies that principle. Every post that participates in the WNS system is not only promoting their own stamps but also indirectly promoting stamps from other countries. It's a global cooperative effort that benefits everyone."

Through the WNS app, postal operators can protect their revenue, promote their products globally, and engage a new generation of collectors. By leveraging the power of cooperation and technology, the WNS app is poised to be a game-changer for the philatelic postal sector, helping posts worldwide drive revenue and reduce the risks associated with counterfeiting.

"WNS 2.0 is just the beginning. We're building a platform that will continue to evolve and provide even more value for postal operators and collectors alike," Combes concluded. **HN**

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Postal Corporation of Kenya's role in transforming public service delivery



For the past 12 years, the Kenyan national designated postal operator, Postal Corporation of Kenya (Posta Kenya), has played a pivotal role in the government's Huduma Kenya initiative, which has revolutionized public service delivery across the country.

Text by HELEN **NORMAN**

Now, the Post is building on this foundation by offering government services directly to consumers through its nationwide network of 600 post offices, while continuing its transformation to become a modern and digital e-commerce enabler to support Kenyan citizens. In short, the postal operator is becoming a cornerstone of the country's digital transformation.

Posta Kenya's involvement began in 2013, when it signed a memorandum of understanding with Huduma Kenya. Launched as a flagship project under Kenya's Vision 2030, Huduma Kenya aims to transform the country into a newly industrializing, middle-income economy



Uganda Communication Commission Board of Directors' visit to the Huduma Center and guided by Huduma staff in July 2025

offering a high quality of life to all citizens. It streamlines access to government services through centralized "one-stop-shop" hubs known as Huduma Centres, which give citizens easy access to a wide range of services, from ID card applications to health services, among others.

A long-standing partnership with Huduma Kenya

According to Posta Kenya, its partnership with Huduma Kenya has evolved over the years. Today, the Post houses 27 of the 58 Huduma Centres in operation across the country. Vincent Otieno, Principal Corporate Communications and Public Affairs Officer at Posta Kenya, explains the success of this partnership: "The partnership with Huduma

Kenya has been instrumental in decentralizing government services to citizens, offering them more convenience and efficiency".

Since the launch of the first Huduma Centre at the General Post Office in Nairobi, the model has improved significantly. Over the past 12 years, Huduma Kenya has expanded nationwide, with the Post's infrastructure playing a key role in this success. Otieno notes that "Posta Kenya's widespread presence across the country, with more than 600 post offices, allows us to bring government services closer to the people, particularly in remote areas".

Broadening services and access

The Post is now working to replicate government services in post offices without Huduma Centres. Posta Kenya plans to extend services such as the delivery and collection of national ID cards, birth certificates and Kenyan travel passports to all its outlets, with the aim of improving access for citizens not living near a Huduma Centre.

Posta Kenya is also collaborating with the Ministry of Information, Communications and the Digital Economy to set up digital hubs across all 47 counties. These hubs will offer services including e-payments, e-commerce and e-governance solutions.

Pius Kipkoech Bett, a colleague of Otieno, highlights the importance of these hubs: "Digital hubs will empower citizens by providing access to essential services such as e-payments and e-governance, further promoting convenience and inclusivity".

The ongoing development of Kenya's new national addressing system will also streamline last-mile delivery, ensuring that citizens can receive government documents and services at their doorsteps. Bett adds that "this system will revolutionize how we deliver services, especially in rural areas where addresses are not standardized".

Digital and e-commerce future

As part of its long-term strategy, Posta Kenya is also looking to integrate government services into its online platform, making it easier for citizens to access services from home. The Post's website, posta.co.ke, will enable customers to submit applications, make payment and select a preferred post office for collection. This digital shift is aligned with the government's broader goal of building a connected and digitally enabled nation.

Otieno envisions a future where Posta Kenya not only provides traditional postal services but becomes a key player in the digital economy. He emphasizes that "by expanding our digital offerings and embracing e-commerce, Posta Kenya is positioning itself as a key enabler of Kenya's digital economy, ensuring that we remain relevant in an increasingly digital world".



Posta Kenya is building on this foundation by offering government services directly to consumers through its nationwide network of 600 post offices.

Strategic benefits for Posta Kenya

The expansion of government services benefits not only Kenyan citizens but also Posta Kenya itself. These services have opened new revenue streams and helped to strengthen the Post's national relevance. Strategic partnerships fostered through these initiatives have also enhanced public trust and facilitated staff upskilling.

Looking ahead, the Post is focused on modernizing its infrastructure and fleet, improving customer service, and enhancing logistics and courier services. These efforts



UPU Director General Masahiko Metoki with the Communications Authority of Kenya Director General Mr. David Mugonyi, EBS, members of Posta Kenya Board of Directors, the Postmaster General Mr. John Tonui and the Deputy Center Manager Huduma GPO Nairobi, Mr. Bromley Jumba.

Posta Kenya is also looking to integrate government services into its online platform, making it easier for citizens to access services from home.

will be supported by investment from the Universal Service Fund (USF) and through public-private partnerships, ensuring that Posta Kenya remains at the forefront of service delivery.

The USF, established under the Kenya Information and Communications (Amendment) Act of 2009, is managed by the Communications Authority of Kenya to expand access to ICT services and promote innovation. Funded by levies, government appropriations, grants and donations, the USF supports impactful projects in underserved areas, including the UPU's Post4Health initiative, which will enable Posta Kenya to distribute health products and technologies countrywide.

Posta Kenya's involvement in Huduma Kenya is just one example of how the post office is evolving to meet the needs of a digital-first society. As the government continues to roll out digital services, the Post is positioning itself to be a leader not just in postal services, but also in e-commerce, logistics and digital governance. With its vast network, commitment to innovation and deepening government partnerships, Posta Kenya is well on its way to becoming a driving force behind the country's digital transformation. **HN**

"The partnership with Huduma Kenya has been instrumental in decentralizing government services to citizens, offering them more convenience and efficiency"

Vincent Otieno

Principal Corporate Communications and Public Affairs Officer at Posta Kenya



DELIVERING THROUGH THE STORM: HOW UPU HELPED SVG POST REBUILD AFTER HURRICANE BERYL

Hurricane Beryl roared across the Caribbean in July 2024, strengthening into a category 5 hurricane and leaving a trail of destruction across Grenada, Jamaica, and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. Communities were devastated, essential infrastructure flattened, and approximately 1,700 residents forced to evacuate. In southern Grenadines (Union Island, Mayreau and Canouan), postal facilities were left in ruins and six postal staff lost their homes. Postal services, which are a critical communication lifeline for these isolated island communities, were paralyzed.

Text by TITANI JOSEPH **MKANALUMO**



Damaged home of one of six postal employees.

Hurricane Beryl caused destruction on a scale not seen since 1851. Saint Vincent and the Grenadines Postal Corporation (SVG Post) activated the disaster risk management (DRM) response protocol shortly afterwards. Continuous weather reports from the National Emergency Management Organization (NEMO) and the meteorological office enabled postal leadership to track the storm's progress, provide real-time updates, and assess the initial damage. However, with power, the Internet, and the water supply all down at all facilities and inoperable servers, postal operations were severely constrained.

The Universal Postal Union (UPU), through the Emergency and Solidarity Fund (ESF), quickly stepped in and initiated rapid support to assist SVG Post in its recovery efforts. The ESF, which provides flexible short-term assistance, including equipment, training and expert services, proved vital in enabling quick adaptation to local needs.



Advanced experts of the UPU visit damaged facilities of Union Island Post Office.

Within weeks, discussions on an ESF-supported restoration project began between the UPU and SVG Post, facilitating a fast-track recovery effort. By early August, SVG had completed a preliminary damage report and a final list of essential equipment was drawn. Procurement of the equipment commenced in September through the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), including satellite phones, generators, computers, printers, firehoses, filing cabinets and other office supplies.

The strength of this response came not only through international support, but through local leadership. SVG Post's International Affairs, Disaster Risk Management and Quality of Service Manager, Raffique Samuel – also trained in the provision of disaster and mass casualty training through the SVG Cadet Force and later various levels of the UPU DRM programmes, including the UPU's standard DRM course, TrainPost DRM e learning course, and advanced expert DRM workshop – demonstrated an exceptional level of coordination. Samuel maintained contact with staff and regional partners, including the Caribbean Disaster Risk Management Team, and helped oversee recovery planning from the outset.

"The flexibility and speed shown by SVG Post leadership and experts has been impressive", said Fumiko Nohara, UPU Project Manager. "Their team's readiness and ability to communicate clearly with the UPU helped accelerate response plans."

Despite damaged infrastructure and extended recovery times for electricity and

telecommunications, SVG Post managed to partially resume operations. Manual counter services were re-established at the head office in Kingstown, while a hybrid delivery model for Union Island, Mayreau and Canouan ensured that mail and parcels reached displaced residents on the mainland. SVG Post staff also provided essential community support, assisting with relief distribution, aiding the elderly, and maintaining assurance among the evacuated residents.

"The experience exposed both our strengths and our vulnerabilities", noted Samuel. "It reinforced the need for more robust continuity planning, better digital infrastructure, and staff cross-training for emergency roles."

For small island developing states (SIDS) like Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, the impact of Hurricane Beryl is also of a structural nature. The experience offers valuable lessons for the global postal community: flexibility in operations, strong internal communication, and partnerships with government and international actors can accelerate recovery and restore essential services when they are needed most.

"Preparedness can save costs seven to ten times over compared to post-disaster recovery alone", added Nohara. "Thanks to member countries for the regular budget allocation to the ESF, we can formulate and implement ESF projects sooner and quicker, and these projects are proving to be effective in building stable, continuous postal operations."

"The experience exposed both our strengths and our vulnerabilities. It reinforced the need for more robust continuity planning, better digital infrastructure, and staff cross-training for emergency roles."

Raffique Samuel

Disaster Risk Management and Quality of Service Manager, SVG Post

Hurricane Beryl's experience reinforced the urgent need for climate-resilient infrastructure and adaptable service models, including mobile post offices. Through the ESF's DRM technical project, SVG Post is replacing damaged equipment and restoring core operations by providing mobile generators and satellite equipment, among others. It is also piloting a mobile post office for Union Island and implementing an emergency action evacuation pilot in partnership with the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency, NEMO, the European Union, and the Public Sector Reform Unit.

While important strides have been made, SVG Post continues to navigate a complex landscape of infrastructure and operational demands. Planned enhancements – including facility renovations, disaster-resilient upgrades, improved employee support spaces, IT and security modernization, and the establishment of contingency systems – remain key to ensuring the long-term safety, reliability and resilience of postal services. As environmental risks intensify, advancing these priorities will be critical to safeguarding service continuity and community connectivity across Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. **TJM**

RECOMMENDED READINGS

UNCTAD

**TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION
REPORT 2025 - INCLUSIVE AI FOR
DEVELOPMENT**



<https://unctad.org/publication/technology-and-innovation-report-2025>

UNDP

**2025 HUMAN DEVELOPMENT
REPORT - A MATTER OF CHOICE:
PEOPLE AND POSSIBILITIES IN THE
AGE OF AI**



<https://www.undp.org/lesotho/press-releases/2025-human-development-report-hdr-press-release-matter-choice-people-and-possibilities-age-ai>

ITU

**MEASURING DIGITAL DEVELOPMENT
2025 - STATE OF DIGITAL
DEVELOPMENT AND TRENDS:
CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES IN
ITU REGIONS**



<https://www.itu.int/itu-d/reports/statistics/sddt/>

precision
tracking data security
monitoring RFID
tracking service solution
quality integrity
technology
transmission global

One of the Universal Postal Union's main goals as an intergovernmental organization is to support its member countries to monitor and improve the quality of mail services for their customers worldwide. The Global Monitoring System (GMS) offers different services aiming at monitoring quality and processes on a global, cross border or national scale. GMS is continually committed to providing avenues for members to improve quality of service.

For more information contact Ms Margaret Westfall, TAM UPU GMS Program, margaret.westfall@upu.int



MARKET DIGEST

by LIN LIU

ARGENTINA

CORREO ARGENTINO has launched SIE Empresas, a fully digital service enabling companies large and small to send official registered letters with legal validity under their business name via the SIE (Sistema de Imposición Electrónica – Electronic Filing System) platform. Available since the end of May 2025, the service offers identity verification through the National Registry of Persons, and secure online payments, while ensuring that addressees receive physical delivery in compliance with legal requirements. Users can process individual or bulk mailings, customize content, preview documents, track history, and access user manuals – all online. Registration and business authentication are performed digitally, marking a significant step in Correo Argentino's postal digital transformation aimed at streamlining corporate document management.

(Source: correoargentino.com.ar)

AUSTRALIA

AUSTRALIA POST has introduced Australia Post Parcels, a new post office format focused solely on parcel services. Offering 24/7 parcel lockers and self-service kiosks, the pilot locations in Fitzroy and Waterloo will soon expand to St Leonards and Chadstone. The concept responds to rising e-commerce demand and aims to create a more flexible and efficient national network.

(Source: parcelandpostaltechnology-international.com)

BELGIUM

BPOST has launched Secure Delivery, a service requiring addressees to provide a six-digit code or QR code to receive parcels. The system aims to reduce fraud in high-value deliveries. The code is sent exclusively to the addressee via e-mail and the My bpost app. bpost is the first Belgian postal operator to introduce this enhanced security feature.

(Source: press.bpost.be)

CHINA

CHINA POSTAL EXPRESS & LOGISTICS has expanded its mobile phone recycling initiative to 32 cities in partnership with China Resources Recycling Group. Customers can schedule secure pick-up via the Xin Sui Wu You mini-app – a lightweight app that users can open and use instantly without the need for separate installation – with EMS couriers collecting the devices. A pilot launched in January 2025 includes safe dismantling and material recovery at a dedicated facility in Shantou. The programme supports China's carbon neutrality goals by promoting green logistics and responsible e-waste disposal.

(Source: chinapost.com.cn)

CROATIA

CROATIAN POST reduced greenhouse gas emissions by 11,600 tonnes in 2024 – an 18% decrease – despite increased delivery volumes. This achievement is attributed to a fleet of 400 electric vehicles, energy-efficient facilities, and an eco-driving programme for 2,200 drivers. Postal workers logged 14.5 million "green kilometres", accounting for 30% of total delivery travel. The initiative is part of Croatian Post's commitment to zero emissions by 2040 under International Post Corporation's Sustainable Mobility and Management Strategy framework.

(Source: hrvatska.posta.hr)

INDONESIA

PT Pos INDONESIA (PosIND) and PT Bank Muamalat Indonesia launched the Hajj Pilgrims Savings Account (RTJH) service at over 4,800 post offices and numerous agents across Indonesia. This initiative enables easy, sharia-compliant hajj registration without needing to visit banks, supported by digital verification and integration with the Pospay Mobile app. The RTJH requires an initial deposit of 25 million Indonesian Rupiah (IDR) to obtain a hajj portion number, while Islamic Banking Hijrah Savings Accounts start at 100,000 IDR with no fees. This collaboration expands financial inclusion and simplifies access for pilgrims nationwide.

(Source: posindonesia.co.id)

IRELAND

AN POST AND OXFAM IRELAND

have introduced the PostBack programme, allowing residents to donate unwanted clothing using free, recyclable bags. Items can be picked up or dropped off at post offices at no cost. The initiative targets Ireland's annual textile waste of 63,000 tonnes and supports global poverty reduction efforts.

(Source: oxfamireland.org)

JAPAN

JAPAN POST Co. launched the Digital Address service, assigning unique seven-character alphanumeric codes to residential addresses. Available since May 2025 via Japan Post's app for Yu-Pack parcel shipping labels, the service automates full address entry to reduce errors in online transactions. Users register through a Yu ID – Japan Post's official user identification system – with 15 million accounts issued by the end of April. The Digital Address remains the same even if the user moves, requiring only an address update notification. The code links solely to locations, preserving user privacy, and the service is free. Japan Post plans to offer integration to third-party businesses at no cost, aiming to enhance convenience and open new revenue streams over the next decade.

(Source: asahi.com)

NIGERIA

THE NIGERIAN POSTAL SERVICE (NIPOST)

will stop accepting cash payments at post office counters nationwide starting 1 July 2025. All transactions must be completed using approved electronic channels. This move is part of NIPOST's modernization strategy to enhance service efficiency and support Nigeria's growing digital economy. According to Director of Corporate Communications Franklin Alao, the transition to a cashless system marks a key step in repositioning NIPOST as a technology-driven institution aligned with the Renewed Hope Agenda of President Bola Tinubu.

(Source: vanguardngr.com)

PHILIPPINES

PHLPost has introduced promotional rates for domestic and international tracked mail services, including Express Mail Service, to provide affordable courier options. Postmaster General Luis D. Carlos says the new pricing offers competitive alternatives to existing market rates. Rates are calculated based on volumetric weight and destination – for example, a 1.5 kg item to Japan costs 1,680 Philippine pesos (PHP), or 1,254 PHP to Singapore. The initiative aims to offer cost-effective solutions for personal and business users.

(Source: pna.gov.ph)

PORTUGAL

CORREIOS DE PORTUGAL (CTT)

is piloting reusable packaging for e-commerce shipments in partnership with Zeroo and Impact World. The programme allows SMEs to use returnable packaging free of charge, with reverse logistics handled via over 12,000 CTT locations. Packaging can be reused up to five times, contributing to a circular economy model. The initiative is part of the National TestBeds Network and funded by Portugal's Recovery and Resilience Plan.

(Source: parcelandpostaltechnology-international.com)

SINGAPORE

SINGAPORE POST LIMITED (SingPost)

has committed 30 million Singapore dollars to upgrade its Regional eCommerce Logistics Hub (eComm LogHub). New sorting systems will increase small-parcel processing capacity from 100,000 to 300,000 items per day, with overall capacity reaching 400,000 parcels daily. The modular design enables future scalability while consolidating mail and parcel sortation under one roof. The initiative, which will free 7,700 m² at the SingPost Centre for new leasing or development opportunities, supports a digitally optimized postal model in collaboration with the Singapore Government.

(Source: singpost.com)

SLOVENIA

Pošta Slovenije has partnered with logistics platform FarEye to enhance last-mile operations through AI-based route optimization. The collaboration aims to improve delivery accuracy, support multi-channel processing, and reduce costs by up to 20%. The system, which includes a control tower for real-time tracking, supports letters, parcels and express items. This initiative contributes to EU emissions reduction targets.

(Source: supplychaindigital.com)

SWEDEN

PostNord has launched the MACBETH project to test megawatt charging systems (MCS) for electric long-haul trucks. In partnership with VTT Finland, and with funding from Horizon Europe, the initiative includes MCS installation at terminals across Sweden to assess feasibility in cold weather conditions. The project supports PostNord's goal of fossil-free operations by 2030 and aims to inform future public charging infrastructure.

(Source: postnord.com)

THAILAND

Thailand Post has partnered with Thailand's Ministry of Commerce to support fruit farmers impacted by border trade disruptions, particularly reduced exports to Cambodia. Over 3,000 tonnes of Thai fruits – including durian, mangosteen, and mango – will be delivered nationwide for free using Thailand Post's logistics network. Farmers will also receive 238,000 packaging units at no cost. This initiative aims to lower logistics costs and promote direct online sales. A national Thai Fruits Festival 2025 was organized in July to stimulate domestic demand.

(Source: thailandtribune.com)

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