

UNION POSTALE

MOVING THE POSTAL SECTOR FORWARD SINCE 1875 | WINTER 2025/2026

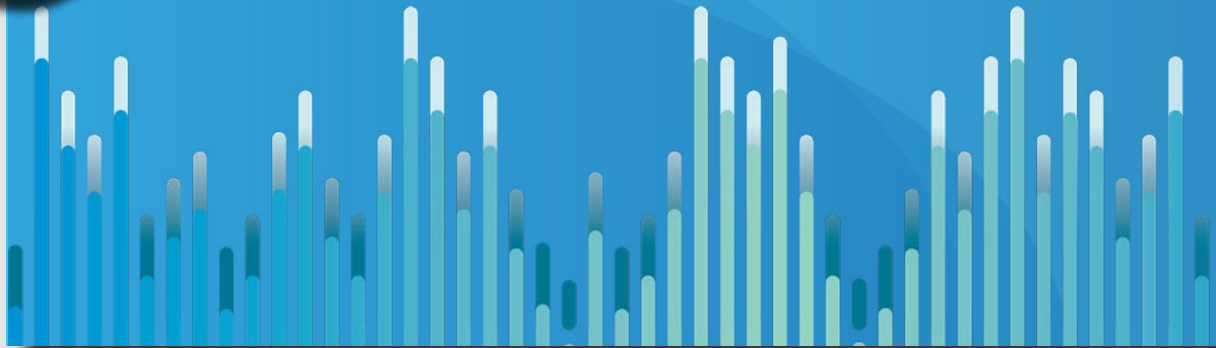


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BRIDGING THE DIGITAL DIVIDE VIA THE POST



VOICE MAIL




DIGITAL UNION



POSTAL MATTERS






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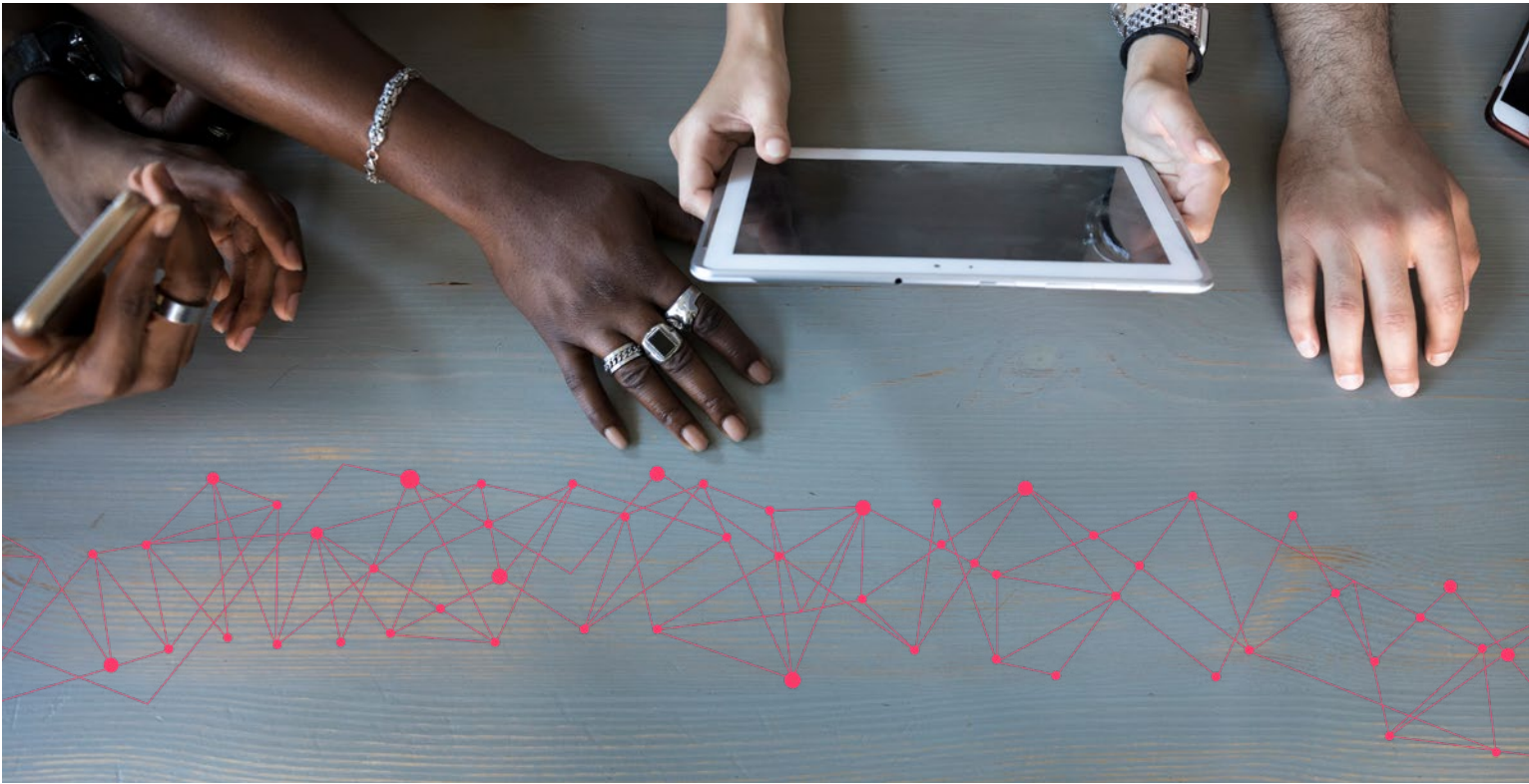


The UPU’s blog “Postal Matters” offers fresh insights into the international postal sector, as well as its technological advances and latest innovations. Postal operators and other postal sector players are welcome to send us their contributions containing reflections, views and perspectives on the postal 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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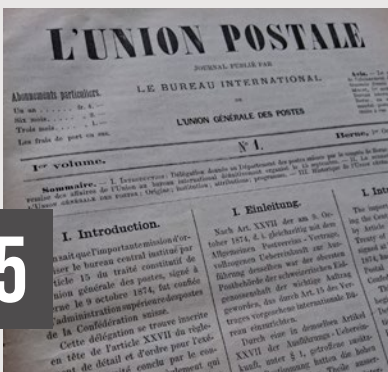
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POST FROM THE PAST UNION POSTALE: 150 YEARS AND COUNTING

On 9 October 2024, the Universal Postal Union celebrated its 150th anniversary. In 2025, as the International Bureau marked its own 150 years, another cornerstone of the UPU's institutional history also reached the same milestone: Union Postale, the magazine published without interruption since its first edition in 1875, shortly after the Bureau's establishment in Berne.

UNION POSTALE

UNION POSTALE is the Universal Postal Union's flagship magazine, founded in 1875. It is published quarterly in five 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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REIMAGINING THE POST OFFICE FOR THE DIGITAL AGE



“As the sector continues to evolve, broadening the range of services delivered through post offices helps postal operators respond to changing expectations while preserving the universal service mission that underpins our work.”

Masahiko Metoki
Director General, UPU



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As digital technologies continue to reshape societies and economies, ensuring that no-one is left behind has become one of the defining challenges of our time. While connectivity has expanded rapidly, an estimated 2.2 billion people remain unconnected, with many facing barriers to effective digital access, particularly in rural, remote and underserved communities. For the postal sector, this moment presents both a challenge and a historic opportunity.

The postal network continues to play a trusted public role, with over 670,000 post offices worldwide. For generations, post offices have served as gateways to communication, services and inclusion. Today, that role is being redefined for the digital age. As this edition's cover story illustrates, post offices are increasingly emerging as digital hubs – places where citizens can access online services, develop digital skills, participate in e-commerce, and connect with government and financial services in a secure and trusted environment.

This transformation lies at the heart of the UPU's Connect.post initiative, launched in 2022 to accompany member countries as they adapt their postal networks to the realities of the digital world. The initiative has gained momentum, including at the 28th Universal Postal Congress in 2025, reflecting growing recognition of the post office as a platform for national development. Beyond connectivity, digital inclusion depends on people's ability to access and use digital services with confidence, supported by the physical presence of post offices and postal staff who can provide in-person support to less connected groups, particularly rural communities, elderly populations and women. It also includes those who are under-connected because of barriers experienced once online, such as limited digital skills, lack of adequate devices, affordability constraints and low-quality internet access.

Across regions and national contexts, postal operators are already translating this vision into practice. By adapting services in response to local needs, Posts are reinforcing their role as trusted public institutions that strengthen social cohesion, economic participation and confidence in public service delivery.

Rethinking the post office also means safeguarding the long-term viability and relevance of the postal network. As the sector continues to evolve, broadening the range of services delivered through post offices helps postal operators respond to changing expectations while preserving the universal service mission that underpins our work. In this context, digital inclusion is not separate from postal transformation – it is integral to it.

The launch of our latest edition of the Global Panorama report on the postal sector's role in the digital economy reinforces this direction, offering a timely overview of how postal networks contribute to more inclusive digital societies. Building on this milestone, we are working more closely with member countries through advocacy, capacity-building and partnerships, while encouraging greater recognition of the postal network within national digital strategies.

Our path ahead will require sustained investment, political commitment and cooperation across public and private partners, but the direction is clear. By reimagining post offices as trusted digital access points, we can ensure that the benefits of digital transformation reach all communities, and that the postal sector continues to fulfil its enduring mission – connecting people, enabling opportunity, and supporting inclusive development for generations to come.

MASAHIKO METOKI
Director General, UPU

DELIVERING A MORE INCLUSIVE POSTAL FUTURE

EDITOR'S NOTE

While the postal business has changed rapidly over the last several decades, the purpose and power of the Post have remained steady. Its vast network of physical branches, millions of postal workers, and public service mandate have made it a vital partner in reaching people, communities and businesses in every part of the world.

In this edition of *Union Postale*, we delve into the ways the Post is transforming its business model to become a broader inclusive services provider for the modern age. Through these pages, we examine the research, tools, projects and partnerships that are helping position Posts everywhere for success.

Our cover story provides a panoramic view on how postal operators are helping governments bridge digital divides at the national level, highlighting how the UPU's Connect.post programme is building international momentum through advocacy and capacity building support.

Other stories in this issue underscore the crucial role of partnerships in reaching underserved populations. They offer insight into how the UPU is advancing its financial inclusion strategy by working with the private sector. Meanwhile, the new Consultative Committee management team shares how it intends to drive collaboration between Posts and the wider postal sector.

This edition of our magazine offers a glimpse into the UPU's growing role as a fulcrum for cooperation on technical developments that have catalyzed the Post's role as an inclusive channel for global trade. Our Post of the Past feature dives into how the UPU's foundational role in technical multilateralism has shaped its ability to continually adapt to changing needs and global conditions. That multilateralism is what spurred the development of pioneering UPU technology like the International Postal System, which in 2026 marks its 30th year as the cornerstone solution for communication across the postal supply chain.

Sustainable development will be key to service delivery, efficiency and trust as Posts expand their offerings. We take a look at the concrete ways Posts can unlock the benefits of sustainable postal development.

Happy reading!

YANA BRUGIER
Editor-in-chief



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IPS AT 30: PIONEERING A POSTAL SECTOR FOR ALL

Lati Matata, Director of the UPU's Postal Technology Centre, shares how the International Postal System (IPS) revolutionized global operations when it was launched 30 years ago and how it will be fundamental to the sector's next big transformation: interoperability with wider sector players.



Interview by **KAYLA REDSTONE**

Following its launch in 1996, the International Postal System – better known as IPS – became the first global end-to-end mail management system enabling postal operators in the UPU's network to communicate the status of postal items.

While some postal operators had begun to develop their own solutions to manage mail processing, they were disjointed and required massive individual efforts of each operator. In contrast, the Telematics Cooperative and its execution arm, the Postal Technology Centre (PTC), took a holistic approach, working with a group of interested member countries to develop a scalable solution. The result is a platform connecting more than 190 postal operators that has been credited for the accelerated globalization of postal services. The exchange of postal data has been growing 16% year-on-year since 2021, which saw a baseline of 167 million messages observed on the UPU's postal IT network, Post*Net.

"It was pioneering in that a few postal operators came together to build a technology solution that would benefit the entire network of postal operators in the 192 member countries. This altruistic objective echoes the foundation of the UPU, where the whole is greater than the sum of its parts," says Lati Matata, who joined the UPU Postal Technology Centre (PTC) in the early days of IPS and has helped shape its development over more than 25 years.

EVOLUTION OF DATA-DRIVEN MAIL

IPS was conceived to enable track-and-trace of postal items by facilitating the exchange of UPU electronic data interchange (EDI) messages, but it has evolved over the years with inputs from UPU member countries, changing standards and regulations, and changing technology.

IPS was expanded to include additional partners in the postal supply chain, such as carriers. Later improvements enabled posts to conduct management functions like accounting and terminal dues calculations in the platform. As IPS began to collect more and better data from a greater number of sources, the UPU was able to develop value-added services

like quality-of-service improvement programmes, such as performance reporting and pay-for-performance, as well as advanced analytics on sector trends, using the tool.

Based on the needs and feedback of UPU member countries, the PTC also developed a line of products tailored to the infrastructure and business objectives of postal operators in the network. The original IPS offers the full range of mail management functions and is hosted on the postal operator's infrastructure. IPS.POST is a pared-back cloud version of the technology hosted by the UPU and designed for small mail volume postal operators. The newest addition is IPS Cloud, which boasts the full functionality of IPS offered in a cloud solution hosted by the UPU, reducing equipment and maintenance costs for operators.

"IPS is kept up to date, at no additional cost, with the evolution of postal standards and regulations. This means, with the large IPS deployment footprint, practically the entire UPU network of postal operators generates compliant postal data within a reasonable short period of time after any changes in regulations or improvements in UPU standards," he elaborates.

Today, IPS is still considered a cornerstone technology for the PTC and further developments, from the Domestic Postal System (DPS) to the Customs Declaration System (CDS), have been modeled after its example.

"The culture of continuous improvement of the PTC very much started with IPS, as it was impossible to develop a solution for all postal operators at once. So continuous enhancement of IPS to fulfil individual postal operator needs, which may then be useful to other postal operators, was the core principle," Matata explains.

He also credits the solution for revolutionizing the use of data to develop postal products.

"When IPS was developed in 1996, track and trace was still in its infancy. Thirty years later, mail does not even move without that data. IPS galvanized the shift to the data-driven UPU mail products we have today."

Lati Matata

Director of the UPU's Postal Technology Centre

"When IPS was developed in 1996, track and trace was still in its infancy. Thirty years later, mail does not even move without that data. IPS galvanized the shift to the data-driven UPU mail products we have today," says Matata, who adds that the recently developed UPU delivered duty paid (DDP) solution is a beneficiary of this shift.

SINGLE ENTRY-POINT SOLUTION

While IPS has had a competitive edge over other providers for 30 years, but Matata says the UPU won't rest on its laurels.

He outlines plans under the UPU's Technology Strategy for 2026-2029, which envisions a Global UPU Technology Platform whereby both postal operators and non-postal operators can access a single-entry solution for every business function across the supply chain.

"For example, the emerging national, regional and global requirements on customs procedures, both security and fiscal, for example, have made the PTC view IPS and the other solutions – Customs Declaration System (CDS), Domestic Postal System (DPS) and Post*Net – as an integrated set of solutions which provide a complete technology platform for a postal operator. This means it is necessary for all solutions to work together to fulfil postal business needs," he says.

Two elements are critical to making this vision a success: strengthened cybersecurity and interoperability with wider postal sector players.

The PTC has already implemented a number of internationally recognized cybersecurity standards in relation to its platforms and information management. The next step is creating an Information Sharing and Analysis Centre for the postal sector (POST-ISAC) that will enable the entire UPU network and partners to share threat intelligence, build cyber resilience capacity and ensure sector-wide adoption of cybersecurity standards.


To develop a truly global solution, wider postal sector players – including technological solutions providers – will have to be able to interface with the solution. Matata refers to the interoperability with non-postal operators a "win-win-win" scenario – private companies get access to an established global network, postal operators can benefit from additional e-commerce volumes via commercial partners, but without added complexity, and the UPU reaffirms its place as the fulcrum for international postal cooperation.

To preserve the stability and security of the network, any non-postal partners will have to meet a set of standards defined by the UPU and certifiable under its UPU-TechCert programme. Several companies have already undergone the process and met the qualifications.

"This is a step forward for the UPU in showing that the postal sector is for everyone," says Matata. **KR**



BRIDGING THE DIGITAL DIVIDE VIA THE POST




The latest data from the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) has revealed that despite rapid growth in global connectivity, 2.2 billion people remain unconnected to the internet.

Text by HELEN NORMAN

This figure represents roughly a quarter of the global population, with most unconnected individuals living in low- and middle-income countries. Furthermore, many of those who are considered connected still encounter barriers to meaningful connectivity, including a lack of digital skills, issues of data affordability, inadequate devices and low-quality connectivity (e.g. slow speeds and spotty coverage).

These are worrying statistics given that the world is becoming increasingly digital, with essential services – such as government, financial and healthcare services – all rapidly moving online. In a bid to ensure that no-one gets left behind during this digital transformation, the Universal Postal Union (UPU) launched the Connect.post global initiative in 2022. The initiative seeks to address digital divides by transforming all post offices worldwide into digital hubs by 2030.

The Connect.post initiative acknowledges the important role post offices can play in digital inclusion. “The global postal network already serves many disconnected and under-connected people,” says Kevin Hernandez, Digital Inclusion Expert at the UPU. “There are more than 650,000 post offices worldwide, with most of them in rural areas, which happens to be where the most disconnected people live. The focus of Connect.post is therefore leveraging this very extensive network to help connect the less connected.”



The main goal of the project is to connect every post office in the world to the internet by 2030, but as Hernandez explains, that goal is just the starting point for a much bigger initiative. “The project also aims to leverage postal infrastructure to help governments achieve their public policy objectives, through the provision of digital services,” he adds.

According to Hernandez, there are three main types of digital services – e-commerce services to help small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) participate in cross-border trade; e-government

“We hope that these projects, the digital panorama report and the case study library will act as inspiration for other Posts, which can then come to the UPU and work with us to implement digital services.”

Kevin Hernandez
Digital Inclusion Expert, UPU

“When initiatives respond to real community demand, including affordability and ease of use, utilization increases and centres become integral to daily community life and promote ownership amongst the community.”

Dr Gift Kallisto Machengete
Director General of POTRAZ

services to ensure that no-one is left behind when physical channels are removed; and digital financial services.

“One thing underpinning all this is that we’re positioning Posts as providers of the services through a multi-channel approach,” Hernandez says. “The Posts’ biggest selling point is their extensive physical network. In each of these 650,000 post offices, there are already post office counters and postal staff. These staff can act as a gateway to digital services for citizens that are less connected and less digitally savvy.

“I believe this is very important because a lot of the digital inclusion narrative focuses on connecting a specific number of people to the internet by a specific time, but it overlooks the barriers that some may still face after they’re connected. They might not know how to access e-government services, for example, or they might not be comfortable navigating digital financial transactions. In these cases, post offices can act in a supporting and advisory role,” he adds.

According to Radka Sibille, Digital Policies and Trade Coordinator at the UPU, Connect.post – and wider digital inclusion projects globally – has gained momentum in recent years as governments try to bridge the digital divides between urban and rural regions, as well as between genders and between countries. “Two big global digital milestones have helped spur this momentum,” she notes. “First is the UN’s Global Digital Compact, which was adopted in 2024 with governments agreeing to intensify efforts on issues like digital connectivity and digital governance with regards to AI.

“The second milestone was last year’s comprehensive review of the UN’s World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS), launched 20 years ago to help shape how information and communication technologies are used worldwide in a human-centric way,” Sibille continues. “The UN and other stakeholders review the WSIS document every 10 years. When the document was reviewed 10 years ago, post offices were not mentioned.”



Inauguration of Centro de Cercanía (Proximity Center) No. 65 in the town of Colón in Uruguay, Lavalleja Department.

According to Sibille, last year's review of the WSIS document, however, acknowledged the role that anchor institutions – such as post offices, libraries, hospitals and schools – can play in driving meaningful digital connectivity worldwide. The importance of digital transformation was also among key talking points at the 28th Universal Postal Congress in Dubai in September 2025.

A GLOBAL PANORAMA

Building on this momentum, the UPU launched its own report: The Postal Sector's Role in the Digital Economy and Digital Society – A global panorama. The report draws on data from 153 designated postal operators to show how they are already leveraging their extensive physical networks and growing digital capabilities to promote economic, social, financial and digital participation at scale.

“The main goal of the project is to connect every post office in the world to the internet by 2030, but that goal is just the starting point for a much bigger initiative. The project also aims to leverage postal infrastructure to help governments achieve their public policy objectives, through the provision of digital services.”

Kevin Hernandez

Digital Inclusion Expert, UPU

Following on from the fourth edition of the report in 2024, the latest version adopted a new approach by shifting from measuring digitalization to highlighting the vital role the postal sector plays in fostering inclusive digital societies and economies. “The report includes 28 great examples from postal operators around the world using their post office networks to get people connected – and not just in industrialized countries,” Sibille adds. “These examples will, in the future, be included in an online case study library, which will be continuously updated with new success stories and projects as and when they happen. We hope this will be a useful resource for countries looking to transform their post offices into digital hubs.”

Building on the momentum from the report, the UPU is now starting to work with Posts around the world, including in Africa and the Caribbean, to help them develop digital capabilities through the Connect.post project. “Now is the time for action,” Sibille affirms.

And that action is taking shape thanks in part to funding from the Japan Fund, which comes from Japan's Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications. “Through this, we are helping connect post offices in 10 countries, including seven small

island developing states, with more to come,” explains Hernandez. “Here, we are helping Posts introduce new connectivity infrastructure and services, such as e-commerce support for MSMEs and community Wi-Fi in rural post offices, so that the operators can expand the digital services they're already offering. For example, we are helping Kyrgyz Post extend 250 digital financial and postal services to more than 150 previously unconnected post offices.”

Most of these projects are in the early stages, according to Hernandez, with specific details still confidential, but what is clear is that they represent just the start of something much bigger. “We hope that these projects, the digital panorama report and the case study library will act as inspiration for other Posts, which can then come to the UPU and work with us to implement digital services,” Hernandez adds.

DIGITAL INCLUSION IN ACTION

While the UPU continues work on its Connect.post initiative, postal operators around the world have also recognized the value their networks can bring to



Digital centre in Zimbabwe – over 200 post offices in the country have been transformed into digital centres.



La Poste hosts approximately 20% of the government's 'France services centres', where citizens can receive face-to-face support accessing digital services across 10 government ministries and agencies

communities for digital inclusion. The digital panorama report highlights several operators leading the way in this area, from countries in both the developed and developing world. La Poste, for example, plays a central role in the France Services initiative, a government programme ensuring that citizens can access essential public services within 20 minutes of home. France Services centres are hosted by various entities, with La Poste operating about 15% of nearly 2,500 sites, especially in rural and remote areas.

Other examples include Pos Indonesia, which has repurposed its more than 4,300 digitally upgraded post offices as a physical front end for financial services delivered with banking and non-banking partners. There is also Poste Italiane's Polis project, which is a major national initiative to transform Italy's postal network into digital service hubs and one-stop access points for public administration services.

"I think one of the most prominent examples comes from India, which operates the world's largest postal network with around 164,000 post offices – 90% of them in rural areas. In 2018, India launched the

India Post Payments Bank, reaching more than 100 million customers in less than seven years through a strong multi-channel approach," explains Hernandez.

"Digital financial services are available via an app, at post office counters, and through delivery staff at customers' doorsteps. This model has been especially effective in reaching rural populations, particularly women," he continues. "Postal bank accounts are also used for government benefit transfers, supporting marginalized groups. Beyond finance, the Post integrates e-commerce and e-government services. Meanwhile, Post Office Export Centres help rural MSMEs and artisans navigate complex export procedures through face-to-face support. The Post also supports Aadhaar digital ID enrolment and updates, which is critical for people without smartphones or digital skills."

ZIMPOST'S DIGITAL CENTRES

In Zimbabwe, Zimpost, in collaboration with the Postal and Telecommunications Regulatory Authority of Zimbabwe

(POTRAZ), has established more than 200 Digital Centres in its post offices across the country. These centres, primarily located in rural and marginalized communities, aim to bridge the urban–rural digital divide by providing residents with crucial digital infrastructure and services.

The Digital Centres provide affordable access to computers, the internet and essential services in rural areas. They deliver digital literacy training, enable e-commerce participation and access to online jobs, host banking and telecom services, and support e-government platforms. "Through this integrated model, the Digital Centres have not only reduced connectivity gaps but have also strengthened digital skills, financial inclusion, access to public services and community engagement across Zimbabwe," says Dr Gift Kallisto Machengete, Director General of POTRAZ.

Dr Machengete explains why Zimpost is well positioned to play a central role in advancing digital inclusion: "Zimpost has one of the widest and most evenly distributed physical networks in Zimbabwe, including deep rural areas where commercial ICT operators have limited presence. This

existing infrastructure reduces deployment costs and enables Universal Service Fund (USF) investments to reach communities that would otherwise remain excluded. Post offices and postal agencies are also trusted public institutions, which is important for first-time digital users, the elderly, women, persons with disabilities and rural youth. By leveraging Zimpost's footprint, POTRAZ can layer digital services onto familiar community spaces, accelerating inclusion without duplicating infrastructure."

The success of the Digital Centres initiative in Zimbabwe is thanks to a focus on specific community needs, rather than just connectivity. "Services such as printing, scanning, basic computing, internet access and learning platforms are often more immediately valuable to communities than connectivity alone," explains Dr Machengete. "When initiatives respond to real community demand, including affordability and ease of use, utilization increases and centres become integral to daily community life and promote ownership amongst the community."

Dr Machengete also believes that success depends on partnerships, affordability, community relevance and strong regulatory oversight. "Digital inclusion initiatives should

"This approach not only improves territorial equity but also strengthens local economies, prevents unnecessary travel, and reinforces Correo Uruguayo's role as an instrument for social cohesion."

Gabriel Bonfrisco

President of the Board of Directors of Correo Uruguayo

be designed for long-term impact, not just connectivity. Zimbabwe's experience shows that when postal networks are combined with USF support, innovation and community engagement, they can play a transformative role in national digital development," he adds.

PROXIMITY CENTRES IN URUGUAY

Over in South America, Uruguay's postal operator is playing an essential role in digital inclusion through its Centros de Cercanía (Proximity Centres). According to Gabriel Bonfrisco, President of the Board of Directors of Correo Uruguayo, the project was created to tackle "a structural problem in the country: territorial inequality in the access to public services". For decades, citizens living far from Montevideo – Uruguay's capital – faced long journeys, added costs and lost time to complete basic administrative procedures.

The Centros de Cercanía were designed to change that by "bringing government services closer to the people, especially in small towns where there are no permanent public offices." Through partnerships between Correo Uruguayo, town councils and municipalities, existing postal infrastructure has been transformed into decentralized service hubs. Bonfrisco emphasizes that this approach "not only improves territorial equity but also strengthens local economies, prevents unnecessary travel, and reinforces Correo Uruguayo's role as an instrument for social cohesion".

The first centre opened in Arévalo in December 2016, and the network has since grown to 66 centres nationwide. Many are in towns with just a few hundred residents, which Bonfrisco says, "demonstrates a clear commitment to democratizing access to government services". He adds that the steady growth shows the initiative "is not a one-off policy, but a consolidated public strategy".

Celebrating 8th Foundation Day
IPPB DAY
1st August 2025

इंडिया पोस्ट पेमेंट्स बैंक | India Post Payments Bank
Aapka Bank, Aapke Dwaar

LARGEST DOORSTEP BANKER IN THE WORLD
Over 100 Crore doorstep banking requests have been fulfilled in assisted mode by Postman/ Gramin Dak Sevaks

Estimation based on Volume

The India Post Payment Bank delivers digital financial services through a multi-channel approach via its mobile app, at post office counters with handholding support, and directly at customers' doorsteps through delivery staff.

Each centre offers more than 100 services, operating as “real counters for citizen services” that combine postal, financial and government procedures in one place. Beyond services, the social impact is tangible. “For thousands of people, the Centros de Cercanía mean not having to travel dozens of kilometres to access essential services,” Bonfrisco explains. He also highlights their role as community hubs where “the government presents itself in a friendly, accessible and trustworthy manner.”

For other postal operators, his advice is to “leverage the postal operator’s extensive territorial reach as a strategic public policy platform.” In Uruguay, that reach is proving that Posts can be powerful drivers of digital inclusion and territorial cohesion.

CHALLENGES REMAIN

Aside from assisting with digital inclusion, connected post offices also help postal operators diversify their revenue streams. “As we all know, in many countries, mail volumes are decreasing and as a result Posts are closing post offices,” Hernandez says. “This is bad news – one of the main strengths of postal operators is their extensive network. Instead, post offices should be developed into one-stop-shop digital hubs, where revenue is diversified, coming from letters, parcels, e-commerce, financial services, e-government services and more, which in turn will bring more foot traffic into the facility. This reduces postal operators’ reliance on mail. Again, India Post offers a great example here. According to the UPU’s official Postal Statistics, India went from having 156,000 post offices in 2022 to now having 164,000.”

Examples such as those in India, Zimbabwe and Uruguay show the real impact postal networks can have in accelerating digital transformation. However, many challenges remain when it comes to transforming post offices into digital hubs, both at a national and international level.

“At a global level, the biggest challenge is a lack of recognition for the Post as a potential enabler of digital inclusion,” says Sibille. Meanwhile, national challenges include legislative and regulatory restrictions, with some Posts not allowed to offer services beyond the sector. Therefore, governmental intervention is needed. “We’re hoping the panorama report will help to convince governments that leveraging the Post for digital inclusion is a good idea,” adds Hernandez.

Another challenge in some countries is a lack of digital skills; training for post office staff is therefore needed in addition to digital infrastructure. The UPU plays a role here by providing digital capacity building under the Connect.post initiative. “The majority of the projects we are working on in the Caribbean, Central Asia and Africa include a training element,” Hernandez continues. “We also offer technical assistance projects where we help countries think through how they can better leverage their postal infrastructure for digital inclusion. We then create digital transformation assessments. This goes well beyond the Posts themselves. We also speak to all relevant stakeholders, such as government, financial, e-commerce, to find out what their priorities are and how they can align with those of the Post.”

RAISING THE PROFILE OF THE POST

The Connect.post initiative has shown that post offices can play an important role in digital inclusion. But turning that potential into reality will require faster action, more funding and broader partnerships. “One of the most important aspects is to raise the profile of the Post,” notes Hernandez. “Much of the digital inclusion debate currently focuses on connecting individuals, but post offices and other anchor institutions can ensure their communities are not left behind.”

For Sibille, the challenge is reaching the policymakers who shape national digital strategies. “It’s important for those people to understand the value of the Posts,” she explains. The UPU is addressing

“The challenge is reaching the policymakers who shape national digital strategies. It’s important for those people to understand the value of the Posts.”

Radka Sibille

Digital Policies and Trade Coordinator, UPU

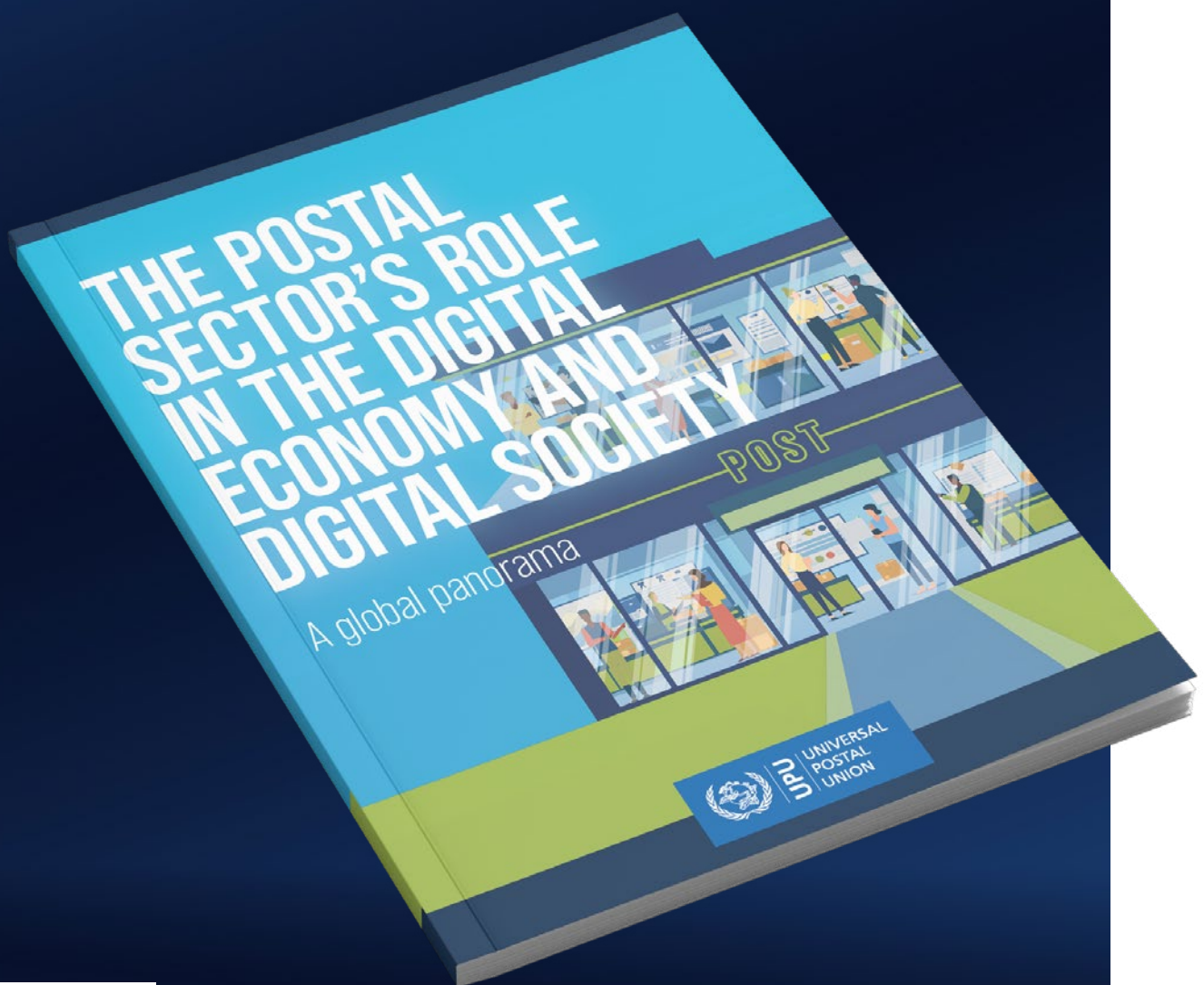
this through advocacy and a new joint training course with the ITU Academy aimed at digital policymakers, showcasing case studies from around the world to prove that Posts can deliver results.

Funding also remains a key hurdle. While the Japan Fund has enabled initial projects, Hernandez notes that around 100,000 post offices are still offline. “To meet our 2030 target, we’re going to have to mobilize a lot of resources, and we’re going to have to do it fast.”

Sibille adds that the UPU cannot do it alone: “We are a small agency... We hope the private sector and other stakeholders will step in. Post offices are already part of the digital public infrastructure and can be leveraged for wider digital inclusion,” she concludes. **HN**

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UNLOCKING WIN-WINS: A GLOBAL WORK PROGRAMME FOR SUSTAINABLE POSTAL DEVELOPMENT

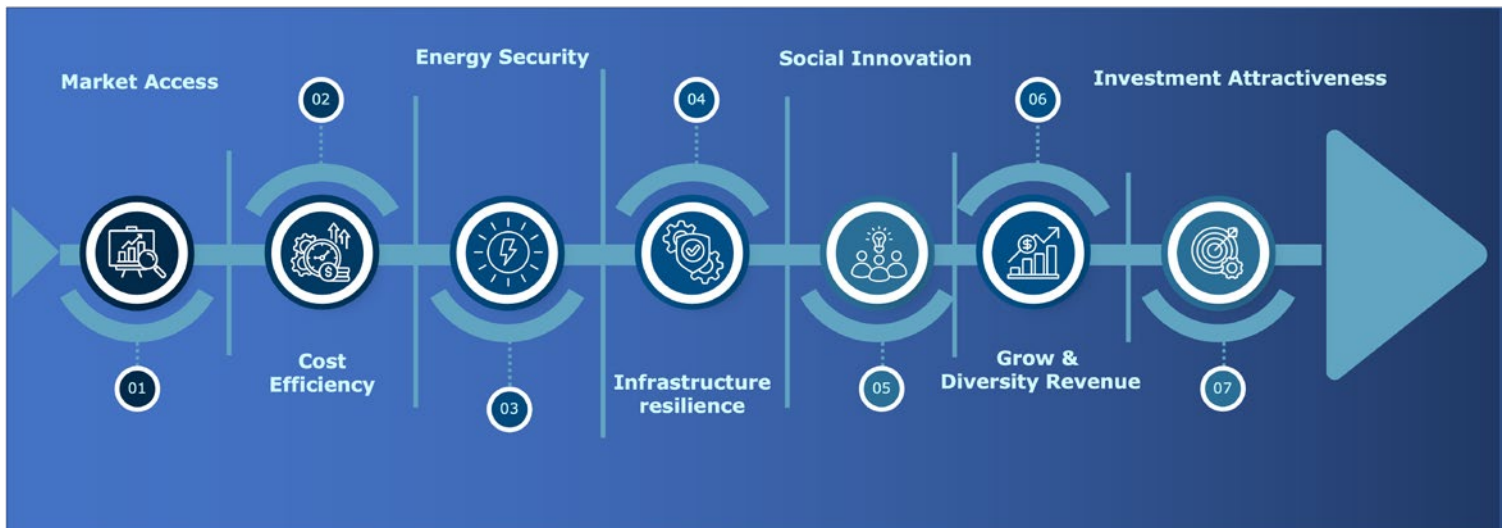
Across the global postal sector, sustainability is no longer a side agenda. As postal operators confront declining mail volumes, rising costs and evolving customer expectations, questions of environmental performance, social impact and long-term resilience are increasingly intersecting with core operational and financial decisions.

Text by **JAMES HALE**

The challenge is no longer whether to engage with sustainable development, but how to do so in ways that strengthen service delivery, efficiency and trust. This perspective has been carried forward into a new global work programme for sustainable postal development.

STAYING PROFITABLE WHILE STAYING RELEVANT

Can the postal sector generate profits and at the same time deliver on social and environmental goals? Or does sustainable development inevitably mean extra reporting, extra projects and less time to



focus on core business challenges – declining mail volumes, rising delivery costs, staffing gaps and tougher customer expectations? Such scepticism is reasonable; operators are being asked to do more for sustainable development, often without additional resources, clear goals or immediate benefits.

However, many of the most practical sustainability solutions are also straightforward operational improvements – cutting fuel use and maintenance costs, reducing failed deliveries, improving staff safety and retention and widening the hiring pipeline. This is supported by recent research and consultation by the UPU International Bureau, which finds that framing the challenge as profit vs. progress risks missing valuable opportunities.

“The debates of recent years have shown that sustainability is not an add-on, but a strategic anchor for the future of the postal sector. When we consider ecological, social and economic goals together, we not only strengthen our resilience but also the public’s trust in the Post as an essential infrastructure.”

Oliver Kaliski

Co-Chair of the Sustainable Postal Services Group (SPSG)

In other words, motivated staff and corporate pledges are important, but sustainability initiatives often succeed in the long-term when they are aligned with the core mission of the postal operator.

HOW CAN THE SECTOR MEET RISING SUSTAINABILITY EXPECTATIONS WITHOUT LOSING FOCUS ON SERVICE QUALITY, AFFORDABILITY AND FINANCIAL REALITY?

Variations on this question were debated during the UPU’s Fourth Extraordinary Congress in Riyadh, as well as in subsequent meetings of the UPU Council of Administration, the Postal Operations Council, and its standing group – the Sustainable Postal Services Group (SPSG).

From these discussions, three guiding principles emerged:

PRIORITIZE OVERLAPS – where climate, circular economy, health, or gender equality initiatives also strengthen postal revenue, efficiency and trust.

ACCESS FUNDING FROM OUTSIDE OF THE SECTOR – operators shouldn’t be expected to carry the full cost of a global transition on their own.

PROVE THE VALUE QUICKLY – start with pilots, evaluate the results, then scale.

These principles were applied and tested through commissioned research, publications, 1-on-1 interviews, regional consultations, workshops, webinars and country projects. Oliver Kaliski, Co-Chair of the SPSG reflects on this consultation and alignment. “The debates of recent years have shown that sustainability is not an add-on, but a strategic anchor for the future of the postal sector. When we consider ecological, social and economic goals together, we not only strengthen our resilience but also the public’s trust in the Post as an essential infrastructure,” explains Kaliski. This process shaped how sustainable

development was ultimately integrated into the new UPU Strategy and Business Plan adopted at the 28th Universal Postal Congress in 2025, which includes a dedicated work programme focused on achieving win-wins for sustainable development and the many urgent needs of the postal sector.

KEY AREAS OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT WORK FOR THE NEXT FOUR YEARS

Climate action is a major focus for the new business cycle, with the UPU International Bureau providing technical and project support to achieve efficiencies, improve operational resilience and generate revenue from new climate-related services such as green delivery and the recycling of high value items. Training, policy development and project support will also be provided in areas such as gender equality, health, and other postal social services.

Many of these work areas are supported by a dedicated set of resources, which offer additional background and practical detail. These can be found on the [“Key Sustainability Publications”](#) page of the UPU website, with summaries provided below.

Framing sustainable development from a business perspective is a practical way to help mainstream the topic within an organization. [The Business Case For Sustainable Postal Services](#) provides an introduction to areas where priorities for postal modernization and sustainable development overlap. Covering themes such as cost efficiency, energy security and infrastructure investment, it identifies practical challenges faced by postal operators, and offers real-world sustainability solutions. For example, e-commerce players increasingly expect their delivery partners to meet environmental/social standards – operators are encouraged to start collecting sustainability data, to avoid becoming locked-out of this vital and growing market.



Two publications focus on climate action – a core work area for the future. [Unlocking Climate Finance for the Postal Sector](#) provides a practical map for how postal entities can secure funding for climate initiatives – positioning climate finance as an “untapped opportunity” for cleaner, smarter, more reliable service provision. The [UPU Climate Facility](#) is a vision for how the International Bureau will support Member Countries to develop bankable, investment-ready projects; leverage grants, loans and blended finance; and develop new revenue streams.

[Gender Equality and the UPU](#) offers a straightforward explanation of why equality for men and women is relevant to postal operators. Men and women often have different needs and by considering both, operators can design postal services that work for everyone, and also attract a greater number and variety of people to work in the sector. Examples are provided in areas such as financial services, trade, and recruitment. Particularly striking is the role of the Post as a key facilitator for everyone to access e-commerce markets, which can help to close gender gaps. The International Finance Corporation found that closing gender gaps could add an additional \$280 billion to the value of the Southeast Asian e-commerce market and \$14.5 billion to the African e-commerce market, between 2025 and 2030. Source: IFC (2021)

In contrast, [Postal Networks: Backbone of the Circular Electronics Economy](#) provides a technical summary of how developing reverse logistics services for used electronics (reuse/repair/refurbish/recycle) can boost postal volumes and revenue. This is more than simply charging collection fees; postal operators could receive resale commissions, generate valuable data and even offer data-wiping services. Ultimately, postal operators are well positioned to establish themselves as an integrated physical and digital network for the circular economy, and benefit from funds already allocated by producers for this purpose.

GETTING INVOLVED

The work is already taking shape on the ground. The UPU International Bureau is supporting member countries to turn sustainability priorities into bankable projects, with an application pipeline of 30+ million EUR. Siva Somasundram, Director, Directorate of Policy, Regulation and Markets emphasizes the importance of participation by the sector. “From postal operators and ministries to regulators and technology providers, a wide range of stakeholders are contributing ideas and expertise as these initiatives move from concept to implementation. This broad engagement is critical to ensuring that sustainability projects deliver long-lasting benefits for the core postal business,” explains Somasundram. **JH**

“From postal operators and ministries to regulators and technology providers, a wide range of stakeholders are contributing ideas and expertise as these initiatives move from concept to implementation. This broad engagement is critical to ensuring that sustainability projects deliver long-lasting benefits for the core postal business,”

Siva Somasundram

Director, Directorate of Policy, Regulation and Markets, UPU

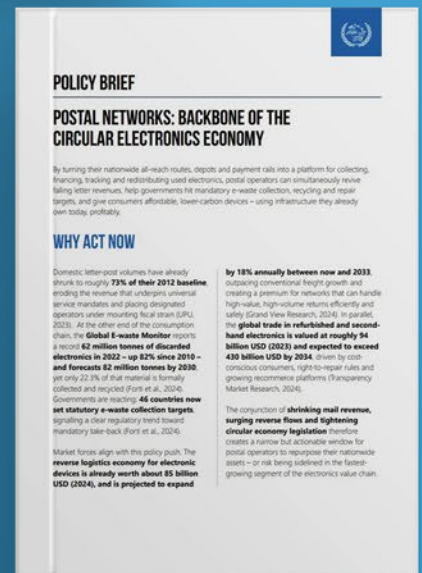
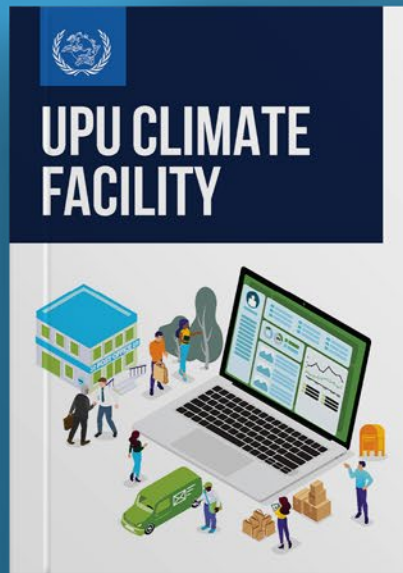
All partners interested in learning more or contributing ideas are encouraged to contact the UPU Sustainability team at

sustainability@upu.int

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN THE POSTAL SECTOR

Recommended readings

<https://www.upu.int/en/universal-postal-union/activities/sustainable-development/key-publications-sustainable-development>



POLICY BRIEF

POSTAL NETWORKS: BACKBONE OF THE CIRCULAR ELECTRONICS ECONOMY

By turning their nationwide all-reach routes, depots and payment calls into a platform for collecting, financing, tracking and redistributing used electronics, postal operators can simultaneously revive falling letter revenues, help governments hit mandatory e-waste collection, recycling and repair targets, and give consumers affordable, lower-carbon devices – using infrastructure they already own today, profitably.

WHY ACT NOW

Domestic letter-post volumes have already shrunk to roughly **73% of their 2012 baseline**, eroding the revenue that underpins universal service mandates and placing designated operators under mounting fiscal strain (UPU, 2023). At the other end of the consumption chain, the **Global E-waste Monitor** reports a record **62 million tonnes of discarded electronics in 2022 – up 82% since 2010 – and forecasts 82 million tonnes by 2030**, yet only 22.3% of that material is formally collected and recycled (Fors et al., 2024). Governments are reaching **46 countries now set statutory e-waste collection targets**, signalling a clear regulatory trend toward mandatory take-back (Fors et al., 2024).

Market forces align with this policy push. The **reverse logistics economy for electronic devices is already worth about 85 billion USD (2024), and is projected to expand**

by 18% annually between now and 2033, outpacing conventional freight growth and creating a premium for networks that can handle high-value, high-volume returns efficiently and safely (Grand View Research, 2024). In parallel, the **global trade in refurbished and second-hand electronics is valued at roughly \$4 billion USD (2023) and expected to exceed 430 billion USD by 2034**, driven by cost-conscious consumers, right-to-repair sales and growing recommerce platforms (Transparency Market Research, 2024).

The conjunction of **shrinking mail revenue, surging reverse flows and tightening circular economy legislation** therefore creates a narrow but actionable window for postal operators to repurpose their nationwide assets – or risk being sidelined in the fastest-growing segment of the electronics value chain.

CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE TO ADVANCE COLLABORATION IN DUBAI CYCLE

As the Universal Postal Union (UPU) begins its 2026-2029 Dubai cycle, the new Management Committee of the Consultative Committee (CC MC) is positioning itself as a central platform for strengthening dialogue and collaboration across the global postal ecosystem.

Text by HELEN **NORMAN**



CC General Assembly during S0

Building on the CC's formal integration into UPU governance, the MC aims to translate the committee's expanded mandate into practical contributions to policy development, standardization and operational initiatives.

The Consultative Committee, established during the Beijing Congress in 1999, witnessed its first major shift in 2022 with the formal incorporation of individual private-sector stakeholders into the UPU's institutional framework. Its purpose is to represent the interests of the wider international postal sector and to provide a structured channel for engagement between designated operators (DOs), wider postal sector players (WPSPs) and UPU governing bodies, while fostering partnerships and ensuring that private-sector expertise informs the UPU's work.

With the Dubai Congress confirming a stronger role for the CC, the 2026–2029 cycle marks a shift from institutional establishment to operational maturity. "As we enter the Dubai Cycle, our New Year's resolution is clear: to move decisively from vision to practical implementation, building on the strong foundation set in the Abidjan Cycle," says Walter Trezek, Chair of the UPU Consultative Committee. "The mandate entrusted to us remains unchanged – our priorities are steadfast, and the time for action is now."

Trezek is supported in his work by Tawnee Steinke, Vice-Chair of the UPU Consultative Committee and representative for BoxC, as well as a seven-member Management Committee drawn from the private sector.

Steinke emphasizes that the CC's transition to operational maturity must be closely aligned with market realities, particularly in fast-growing segments, such as cross-border e-commerce. Steinke says, "The growth of cross-border e-commerce requires closer coordination between policy development and operational execution. The Consultative Committee's role is to ensure that private-sector expertise strengthens implementation, supports interoperability and enables designated operators to scale compliant and sustainable commercial services."

INTEGRATING A BROADER POSTAL REALITY

A central priority for the MC is embedding the Consultative Committee more deeply into the UPU's day-to-day work, reflecting the evolving structure of the global postal market. "In 2026, we resolve to fully embrace the UPU's evolution as an intergovernmental organization that now recognizes the collaborative role of both DOs and WPSPs," Trezek adds. "Our focus in 2026 is to integrate this new reality into our everyday work, ensuring that all voices are heard and valued."

The CC's activities are structured around seven thematic chapters: policy and regulations; addressing and direct marketing; freight and transport; customs and product security; e-commerce; postal financial services; and sustainability. Each chapter is represented by a rapporteur responsible for presenting positions and expertise to relevant Council of Administration (CA) and Postal Operations Council (POC) bodies.

According to Trezek, these chapters are expected to play a more proactive role during the Dubai cycle. "We commit to reorganizing our thematic chapters, so they become engines of innovation and expertise, not merely reactive bodies," he explains. "Our aim is to proactively inject the market intelligence, innovation, and operational know-how of CC members into UPU policy and standardization debates."

CROSS BORDER E-COMMERCE

For MC members, the thematic structure anchors dialogue between the private sector and UPU governing bodies in operational realities. MC member Ignacio Mayer, Senior Manager of New Business Development EMEA at MailAmericas, highlights e-commerce as a defining challenge for the coming cycle.

"My primary priority is the integration of private-sector agility into the global postal network to meet the demands of the exponential growth in cross-border e-commerce," he says, noting that the market is projected to reach US\$1,000.3bn

"As we enter the Dubai Cycle, our New Year's resolution is clear: to move decisively from vision to practical implementation, building on the strong foundation set in the Abidjan Cycle."

Walter Trezek

Chair of the UPU Consultative Committee

by 2034. "We must move from a 30-40-day delivery standard to a 15-day maximum standard in emerging markets."

Mayer describes the CC's thematic structure as "a bridge between regulatory frameworks and operational reality," enabling data-driven discussion of unit economics and cost structures, while supporting "hyper-collaboration," particularly in regions such as Africa.

STANDARDS AND INTEROPERABILITY

From a standardization perspective, MC member Heinz D Graf, Senior Standards Expert at GS1, emphasizes interoperability and shared processes. "Logistics throughout the entire value chain can no longer be handled by a single provider – partners who work together are always needed," he says.

"With over 50 years of experience in standardization... we at GS1 see great potential for increasing efficiency and reducing costs for the UPU as a whole," Graf continues. "This will increase competitiveness."

Graf highlights the value of joint initiatives such as the Postal Prosperity Zones (PPZs) and the role of standardized interfaces in enabling DOs to maintain

their last-mile service. “The knowledge of the private sector is indispensable for the wellbeing of the UPU,” he adds.

PROJECT FACILITATION

The CC’s expanded mandate also enables more active involvement in joint projects. MC member Lars Karlsson, Global Head of Trade and Customs Consulting at A.P. Møller-Mærsk, describes this as a strategic opportunity.

“The CC’s key priorities should focus on shaping strategic innovative joint solutions for a changing trade environment,” Karlsson says. “UPU should see it as an opportunity to co-design, co-create and jointly test



“The growth of cross-border e-commerce requires closer coordination between policy development and operational execution. The Consultative Committee’s role is to ensure that private-sector expertise strengthens implementation, supports interoperability and enables designated operators to scale compliant and sustainable commercial services.”

Tawnee Steinke

Vice-Chair of the UPU Consultative Committee and representative for BoxC

new processes together with CC under the agreed framework and mandate.”

He highlights e-commerce transformation, data exchange, containerization and PPZs as priority areas, while stressing the importance of focus and structure. “It is important that the overall strategy of the CC... is guiding the focus work of the thematic chapters so the work delivers concrete outcomes,” he adds.

ADDRESSING STRUCTURAL CHALLENGES

MC member Dame Damevski, Director of International Markets at e-Boks Group, points to structural challenges, including declining letter volumes and the lack of a public-interest framework for digital communication.

“For decades, physical mail has operated under clear principles of universality, confidentiality and legal certainty. Digital communication has become the primary channel for official and societal interaction, yet it remains largely outside comparable frameworks. This asymmetry represents a significant public policy gap. It also raises a fundamental question about how the historic communication mandate of the postal sector can evolve to remain relevant in the digital domain,” he says.

He also warns of a widening capability gap among designated operators. “The CC is uniquely positioned to engage with both challenges because it brings together expertise across technology, operations, regulation and market practice.

“Over the coming cycle, practical collaboration should focus on three areas: earlier involvement of CC expertise in policy and standards development, more joint pilots aligned with UPU programmes, and clearer pathways for private-sector input into development cooperation and technical assistance, including the development of shared technological infrastructure to support implementation at scale,” Damevski continues.

DELIVERING VALUE THROUGH COLLABORATION

Across the MC, there is a shared emphasis on delivery and measurable impact. “This year, we will harness our greatest asset – our members,” Trezek says. “The Consultative Committee will establish professional, structured frameworks for matchmaking, partnership forums and collaborative projects.”

“Our guiding principle is simple: every action we take must strengthen the open UPU ecosystem and deliver concrete, practical benefits for our members,” he adds.

Concluding, Trezek says, “We pledge to maintain open and transparent dialogue as we bring this agenda to life. Let’s make 2026 the year we truly build, collaborate and deliver – turning our collective vision into measurable success for the UPU and its members.” **HN**



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TRADEPOST TAKES ITS FIRST STEPS IN CÔTE D'IVOIRE



In early December 2025, Abidjan became the focal point of a new chapter in postal trade facilitation. Over five days, representatives of the Government of Côte d'Ivoire, customs authorities, La Poste de Côte d'Ivoire and designated postal operators from across West Africa met with the Universal Postal Union (UPU) to launch TradePost in the country. The regional workshop culminated in the establishment of the first TradePost national committee, marking the start of implementation, and positioning Côte d'Ivoire as the first country to implement this trade facilitation model through its postal network.

REAFFIRMING THE UPU'S TRADE FACILITATION MANDATE

Trade facilitation has long been embedded in the UPU's mandate. Traditionally associated with large freight and containerized trade, facilitation efforts today must respond to a different reality: millions of small parcels crossing borders daily, driven by the rapid expansion of e-commerce.

"Trade facilitation concerns many segments of the postal network and supply chain – physical services, financial services, electronic services, customs, airlines and security," explains Housseem Gharbi, Expert on SME Growth and Trade at the UPU. The surge in cross-border e-commerce has increased the volume of small packets, placing the postal network at the centre of this transformation.

Where traditional systems were built for bulk freight, the modern economy demands speed, interoperability and real-time data exchange. In this context, TradePost is a trade facilitation reform framework anchored in the postal network. It operationalizes the "one-stop shop" concept by aligning institutions, modernizing logistics processes and integrating data systems to streamline procedures and reduce friction at borders.

"The launch of TradePost is not merely an operational update," Gharbi notes. "It is a strategic reaffirmation of the UPU's core mandate to foster collaboration

Text by **MAKIKO HAYASHI**

"The launch of TradePost is not merely an operational update. It is a strategic reaffirmation of the UPU's core mandate to foster collaboration and promote trade facilitation and trade inclusion worldwide."

Housseem Gharbi

Expert on SME Growth and Trade at the UPU



“Côte d’Ivoire’s decision to position itself as a pilot country is part of a clear strategic vision: to make e-commerce a lever for wealth creation and economic growth.”

Gaston Esmel Méléde

Director of E-Commerce at Côte d’Ivoire’s Ministry of Commerce and Industry

and promote trade facilitation and trade inclusion worldwide.” By integrating customs, security, logistics and data, TradePost repositions the Post as a comprehensive trade partner.

WHY CÔTE D’IVOIRE?

For Gaston Esmel Méléde, Director of E-Commerce at Côte d’Ivoire’s Ministry of Commerce and Industry, the decision to pilot TradePost reflects a deliberate national strategy.

“Côte d’Ivoire’s decision to position itself as a pilot country is part of a clear strategic vision: to make e-commerce a lever for wealth creation and economic growth,” he explains.

According to Méléde, the country offers a dynamic digital ecosystem, high mobile penetration and widely adopted electronic payment solutions. As a logistics hub with the ports of Abidjan and San-Pedro, it is well positioned to test and scale cross-border trade facilitation solutions.

But infrastructure remains critical. “All of this must be supported by appropriate infrastructure,” emphasizes Méléde.

Asked by Union Postale how the national postal operator would strengthen operational efficiency, trust and quality of service, Méléde describes the transformation underway: “Modernized processes, digitalized flows and strengthened track and trace capabilities will improve efficiency,” he explains.

“Positioning the Post as a trusted third party for delivery, cash on delivery, digital identity and returns management will reinforce confidence.” He adds that improved delivery times and inclusive coverage will help align services with international e-commerce standards.

ADDRESSING BARRIERS HEAD-ON

The December workshop highlighted structural challenges, including complex procedures, logistics bottlenecks and gaps in infrastructure. According to Méléde, three priorities require urgent attention at national level.

“The simplification and digitization of procedures, particularly customs procedures, are essential to reduce delays, costs and uncertainty for e-commerce operators,” he explains. He also points to the need to strengthen logistics capabilities, particularly for small parcels, last-mile delivery and returns management, which are critical to customer confidence. A third priority is improving interoperability between information systems linking the postal service, customs, payment platforms and private-sector actors.

Addressing these barriers, he stresses, requires an inter-ministerial approach, reinforced public–private coordination, and clear strategic leadership. In this context, cooperation with the UPU is strategic, as it provides an internationally recognized framework, enabling Côte d’Ivoire to align its postal and logistics systems with global standards while strengthening national capacities and integrating the country into global digital value chains.

INCLUSION IN PRACTICE

Trade facilitation can sound technical, but its impact is deeply human. For Patricia Zoundi-Yao, Chair of the national movement of small and medium-sized enterprises, the challenges faced by women entrepreneurs are tangible.

“The first challenge remains access to strategic information,” she says. While opportunities do exist, they are fragmented and difficult to exploit. Identifying reliable partners, understanding regulatory requirements and accessing relevant market data calls for resources that many SMEs – especially women-led ones – lack.

Logistics and administrative barriers compound the problem. High shipping costs, complex customs procedures and unpredictable delays discourage smaller businesses. Limited access to secure payment and trade finance solutions adds further constraints.

TradePost, she believes, can help by centralizing trade information, facilitating connections with certified partners, and leveraging the postal network to simplify international logistics.

"The postal network is a strategic lever that remains underutilized for the economic inclusion of SMEs," Zoundi-Yao stresses. With its nationwide reach – including rural areas where many women entrepreneurs operate – it can become a gateway to formalization, offering access to information, administrative services and reliable logistics.

Integrated with digital platforms like TradePost, a modernized postal network can secure transactions, simplify international shipments and reduce information asymmetry. It can also play an educational role – raising awareness of export standards, guiding compliant packaging, and directing businesses towards payment and insurance solutions.

For Zoundi-Yao, the message is clear: international trade should not be reserved for large enterprises. TradePost has the potential to transform local potential into global opportunity.

FROM LAUNCH TO LONG-TERM IMPACT

As TradePost moves from launch to implementation, the emphasis shifts to collective responsibility.

"The success of this initiative will depend on our ability to move quickly from pilot projects to operational solutions," Mèlèdje notes. National ownership by postal services, customs authorities, SMEs and digital platforms will be essential, as will the sustainability of reforms beyond initial funding cycles.

For the UPU, TradePost forms part of a broader effort to ensure that the world's more than 670,000 post offices are fully leveraged as enablers of trade inclusion. Governments, Gharbi argues, must actively integrate postal operators into national trade and e-commerce agendas, including participation in national trade facilitation committees.

So, TradePost in Côte d'Ivoire is more than a country initiative. It illustrates how postal networks can evolve into integrated logistics and digital ecosystems, connecting local entrepreneurs to global markets, and reaffirming the Post's role as a central actor in inclusive economic development.

As Côte d'Ivoire steps forward as a pilot and regional model, the message to other countries is clear: the postal network is not a legacy system of the past, but a strategic infrastructure for the future of trade. **MH**



"The first challenge remains access to strategic information. While opportunities do exist, they are fragmented and difficult to exploit. Identifying reliable partners, understanding regulatory requirements and accessing relevant market data calls for resources that many SMEs – especially women-led ones – lack."

Patricia Zoundi-Yao

Chair of the national movement of small and medium-sized enterprises



TradePost is a strategic initiative that reinforces the UPU's mandate to advance global trade facilitation and inclusion for MSMEs including women entrepreneurs. By integrating customs, security, logistics and data, it positions postal operators as comprehensive trade partners within the international supply chain.

Through policy engagement and capacity-building programmes such as Postal Easy Export, the UPU strengthens member countries' ability to support MSMEs and e-commerce participation in global trade.

Learn more about the UPU's activities on trade facilitation and how they are powering postal trade solutions worldwide:

<https://www.upu.int/en/Universal-Postal-Union/Activities/Trade-Facilitation>



UPU POWERS UP FINANCIAL INCLUSION STRATEGY WITH PARTNERSHIPS

With 20% of the global population still lacking access to financial accounts according to the World Bank's Global Findex 2025, there is much opportunity for postal operators to fill the gap. That's why the UPU is building momentum for postal financial inclusion with a targeted strategy capitalizing on win-win partnerships with the private sector.

Text by **KAYLA REDSTONE**



AXA Advancing Inclusive Insurance in Egypt. Photo: AXA

"As customer needs continue to change, we are faced with an invigorating opportunity to leverage our network, our capabilities and our people – as one of the largest physical networks on our planet – to deliver novel services that help achieve global financial inclusion priorities," says UPU Director General Masahiko Metoki.

"Leveraging partnerships as a catalyst for innovation, knowledge sharing, capacity building and technical enablement, I believe the Post can become a leading provider of modern, affordable and inclusive financial access solutions. By supporting the UPU financial inclusion goals to provide digital payments, savings, inclusive insurance and microfinance services, Posts and partners can uplift and empower the underserved, develop resilient communities and drive socioeconomic development locally, nationally and globally," he adds.

STRATEGY FOR SUCCESS

Partnerships are a key pillar of the UPU's financial inclusion strategy, which relies on not only funding, but more importantly on expertise from partners to develop technical assistance programmes that help advance postal digital payments and savings, inclusive insurance and microfinance services. These technical assistance programmes help postal operators understand customer needs, gain insight

"Many postal operators have created siloed business units for parcels, logistics, banking and digital services. The next step is "ecosystemic diversification" – connecting these services so that each reinforces the others."

Masahiko Metoki
UPU Director General

into potential enablement models with partners, build capacity and literacy for staff and customers, and develop marketing plans to boost customer awareness and generate postal revenues from new services.

While postal operators benefit from innovations and expertise, partners benefit from the opportunity to reach new markets through brick-and-mortar postal outlets and the UPU's close contact with regulators. Through their joint efforts, underserved populations – women, youth, small and medium-sized enterprises and smallholder farmers – gain access to competitive, consistent and compliant services, as well as financial education, protecting them from financial risks, including predatory service providers like loan sharks.

PROGRESS ON PAYMENTS, SAVINGS AND INSURANCE

The strategy has already proven successful for payments and savings, with similar progress on inclusive insurance to follow in the short term.

Launched by the UPU with funding from Visa Inc. and the Gates Foundation in 2019, the UPU Financial Inclusion Technical Assistance Facility (FITAF) sought to help 20 postal operators implement digital payments and savings services. Those projects wrapped in 2023, engaging 5.3 million underserved postal customers, including 3.1 million women (Postal Networks: A Platform for Financial Inclusion Enablement, 2023).

Building on the programme's success, Visa Europe Ltd. recently signed a five-year agreement to launch a second iteration, beginning initially with five pilot projects in 2026.

"We hope the next five years will deliver a repeatable model that successfully scales pilots into national programmes, positioning Posts as key enablers of government digital transformation and financial inclusion. For underserved populations, this can mean easier access to safe digital payments, government benefits, and remittances that arrive quickly and predictably," says Louise Holden, Global Head of Partnerships with Visa Government Solutions.

In addition to expertise and funding for FITAF 2, the UPU and its members will benefit from the integration of Visa's technology with the UPU's postal payments system, including cybersecurity support.

"For Visa, the hope is that this partnership creates deeper, long-term relationships with public institutions that help accelerate responsible innovation. Ultimately, the shared prize is interoperable payment solutions that expand choice for postal customers, alongside a practical playbook that any member Post can adopt at its own pace," says Holden.

On inclusive insurance, the UPU signed five-year agreements with both AXA and CNP Assurances – a subsidiary of France's La Banque Postale. The partners have already laid the groundwork for technical assistance. After completing an AXA-UPU sponsored Global Inclusive Insurance Study, mapping out inclusive insurance customer needs, as well as existing postal insurance models and solutions around the globe in 2024, the Postal Insurance Technical Assistance Facility (PITAF) was launched in July 2025. The PITAF programme is being deployed in five pilot markets in 2026 and will support postal operators in creating, expanding, or diversifying their inclusive insurance solutions and services.

"AXA strongly believes that Posts are uniquely positioned to catalyze accessible, attractive, and affordable protection solutions for low-to-middle income individuals and small businesses. To bring this vision to life, the collaboration between the UPU and AXA will pair the unmatched trust and reach of Posts with insurers' risk management and product design expertise, contributing to advancing financial inclusion and resilience globally," says AXA EssentiALL CEO Garance Wattez-Richard.

CNP Assurances Group Chief Sustainability Officer Rosana Techima adds, "Public-private partnerships like ours with the UPU combine the trust and reach of postal operators with the technical expertise and innovation of private insurers. Together, we can accelerate inclusive insurance solutions that meet the needs of communities that do not have easy access to insurance. For CNP Assurances, this collaboration strengthens our mission of protection for the greatest

"Ultimately, the shared prize is interoperable payment solutions that expand choice for postal customers, alongside a practical playbook that any member Post can adopt at its own pace."

Louise Holden

Global Head of Partnerships
with Visa Government Solutions

number of people as possible, while supporting Posts in diversifying services and enhancing their role in financial inclusion."

OPPORTUNITIES TO ADVANCE MICROFINANCE

The UPU's next target is microfinance. The organization has paired up with the Frankfurt School of Finance & Management to gather research to assess postal readiness to offer microfinance services, determine the specific needs of underserved customers, and outline how partnerships can enable the provision of these services. The researchers are confident this is another win-win-win opportunity for Posts, partners and people.

Access to microfinance can help drive economic resilience for underserved populations. For MSMEs, this means the provision of funds to start or grow a business, and a lifeline to recover from economic shocks. It can provide women and youth with the opportunity to start their own businesses and pursue training. For smallholder farmers, postal microfinance can give them seasonal access to funds that help them boost productivity and manage climate-related risks. By joining forces, postal operators and private sector partners

can help eliminate gaps preventing service delivery to these groups.

“Designated operators bring trust, reach, and physical infrastructure, while private-sector microfinance solution providers and fintechs contribute innovation, technology, risk management expertise and product development capabilities. When these strengths are combined effectively, they can significantly reduce the cost and complexity of delivering financial services to remote and underserved populations,” says Silke Mueffelmann, Head of the Frankfurt School’s Financial Inclusion & Social Entrepreneurship Competence Centre and Director of International Advisory Services.

“Partnerships are most effective when they combine digital efficiency with postal presence, rather than attempting to replace one with the other. Digital-only providers often struggle to reach rural, low-literacy, or cash-dependent populations, while postal networks alone face cost and scalability constraints. Partnerships allow each actor to focus on its comparative advantage.”

While still underway, the research is expected to map postal microfinance solution providers globally and provide a readiness toolkit that will prepare Posts and policymakers implement scalable postal microfinance models, including potential partners.

“A key area of analysis are the operational and partnership models through which designated operators engage in microfinance, including direct provision, agency banking, and partnerships with banks, microfinance institutions, and fintech providers,” Mueffelmann adds.

These research insights will form the basis of a future UPU postal microfinance technical assistance programme, like FITAF and PITAF, for which the UPU is currently exploring collaboration opportunities with prospective private sector partners. **KR**

Interested in working with the UPU on microfinance? Contact UPU Financial Inclusion Programme Manager Ihab Zaghoul (zaghoul@upu.int)

Upcoming projects:

INCLUSIVE FINANCE (FITAF 2)

PHASE 1 SELECTED COUNTRIES:

- BOTSWANA POST
- CAMBODIA POST
- ETHIOPIA POST
- TANZANIA POST
- TURKISH POST

INCLUSIVE INSURANCE (PITAF)

PHASE 1 SELECTED COUNTRIES:

- BENIN POST
- CHILE POST
- MALAWI POST
- TUNISIA POST
- VIETNAM POST

“To bring this vision to life, the collaboration between the UPU and AXA will pair the unmatched trust and reach of Posts with insurers’ risk management and product design expertise, contributing to advancing financial inclusion and resilience globally.”

Garance Wattez-Richard
AXA EssentiALL CEO

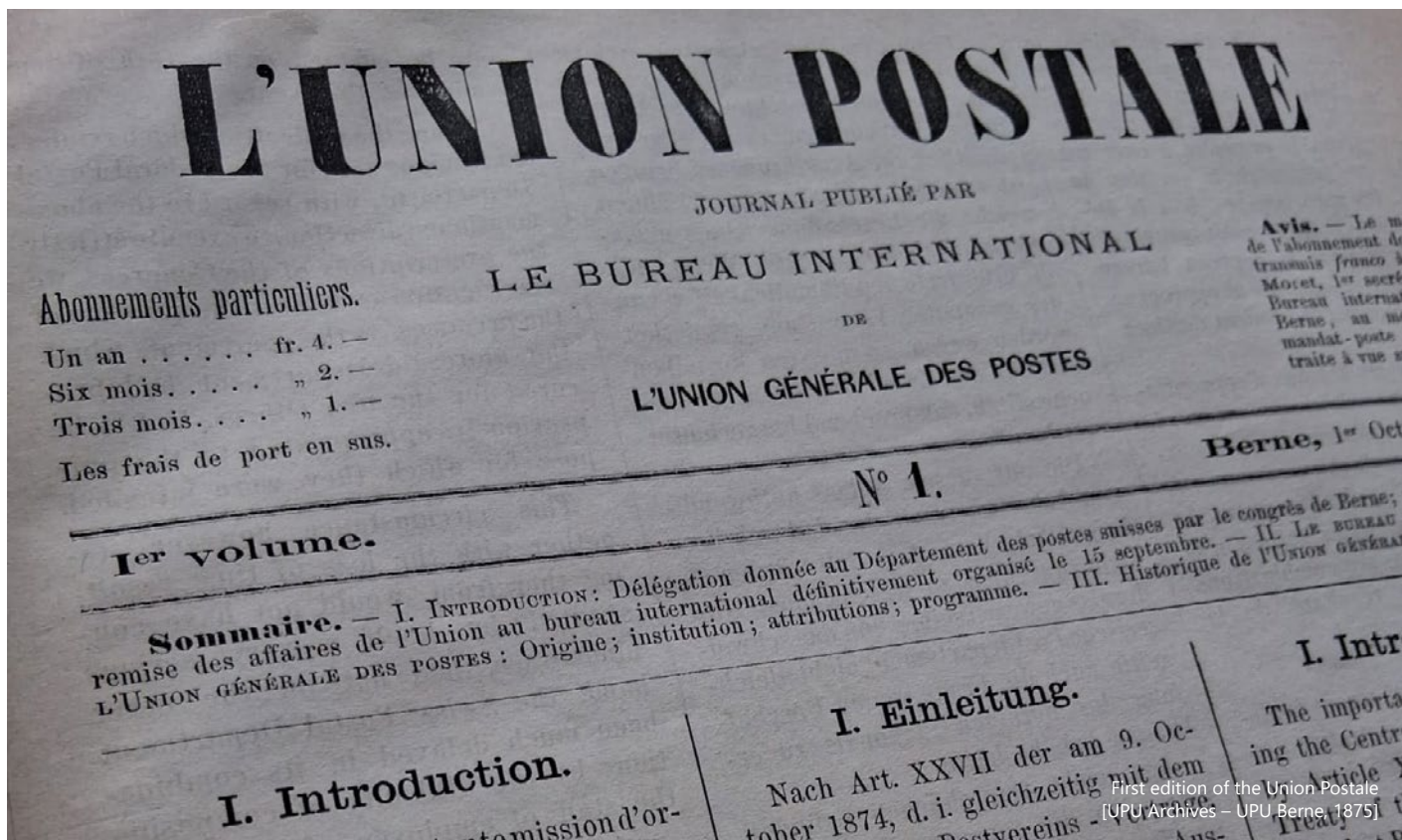
Learn more about how postal networks and the private sector can work together to advance financial inclusion:

<https://www.upu.int/en/publications/financial-inclusion/scalingup-postal-inclusive-insurance-zooming-in-on-innovative-postal-inclusive-insurance-models-an>



<https://www.upu.int/en/publications/financial-inclusion/postal-networks-a-platform-for-financial-inclusion-enablement>





UNION POSTALE: 150 YEARS AND COUNTING

On 9 October 2024, the Universal Postal Union celebrated its 150th anniversary. In 2025, as the International Bureau marked its own 150 years, another cornerstone of the UPU's institutional history also reached the same milestone: Union Postale, the magazine published without interruption since its first edition in 1875, shortly after the Bureau's establishment in Berne.

Text by VINCENT SCHICKER

Indeed, since the 1874 Berne Congress, the International Bureau (IB) has been tasked with "preparing, with the help of documents at its disposal, a special journal in the German, English and French languages" [Article XXVII § 9 of the Detailed and Administrative Regulations, 1874] containing "all communications able to enrich the postal service" [Speech of Eugène Borel at the last session of the Berne Congress, 1874].

Right from its first edition, printed in 4,000 copies, the flagship magazine of the then-named "General Postal Union" (until 1878) was multilingual. The very first article reproduced in three languages (English, French and German) a speech given by Heinrich von Stephan during the 1874 Berne Congress, at the foundation of the Union: "We keenly may vow, that such a complete unanimity of the governments of the great majority of the civilized nations of the globe constitutes a fact, up to the present unequalled in history!" (L'Union Postale 1875/1). From a monthly publication containing up to five articles and around 20 pages, the format of this journal, sent to all Union members, has changed since its beginning. In 1977, it became bimonthly, and then in 1988, quarterly. Over the



Full collection of the Union Postale [UPU Archives – UPU Berne, 1875-current]

years, the number of articles and topics expanded, and new languages were added (Spanish in 1922, and Russian, Arabic and Chinese in 1949) but also removed: the magazine stopped being published in German between 1949 and 1954. In 2017, the German and Russian versions were officially dropped. Over its 150 years of existence, the name was changed only once: in 1951, L'Union Postale became Union Postale.

Of course, Union Postale has always been about all aspects of the postal service: there have been articles about the representation of women among postal employees ("The employment of females in the postal service", L'Union Postale 1875/15), the inauguration of postal schools – training institutions providing postal workers with professional training, particularly those preparing for managerial roles ("Opening of the National Posts and Telecommunications Institute of the Malagasy Republic", Union Postale 1968/10), and new postal technologies ("Automatic parcel-acceptance machines", Union Postale 1981/2).

The magazine has also published reports of Congress, information concerning senior officials of Posts and the International Bureau, lists of publications received by the IB, additions to the film library catalogue, and details about stamps sent for the UPU collection, in addition to obituaries of former Directors General and staff members who

died in the course of their service. While making room for lighthearted text and humorous cartoons, Union Postale has also served to highlight substantive and strategic issues shaping the future of the postal sector, whether it be through an article outlining a problem to be addressed, or through solutions proposed in subsequent issues, or editorial commentaries engaging with previously published articles. As a space for debate and for exchange, Union Postale has, over the years, explored all facets of the postal world and its history.

Since its beginning, the magazine has accepted and published articles on a wide range of topics from a variety of contributors: from IB staff members, to postal experts reporting on their missions, to postal employees sharing their challenges or describing their day-to-day work. Over time, the publication has also evolved in step with technological developments, with its format – including its online platform – adapting accordingly. Photographs gradually started appearing in the 1920s and by the 1960s were an integral part of the magazine, along with building plans, organizational charts and postal emblems.

A vital testament to the International Bureau's role in connecting Union members, the magazine is more than a conduit for circulars and letters to postal administrations. Between its pages are

Right from its first edition, printed in 4,000 copies, the flagship magazine of the General Postal Union was multilingual. The very first article reproduced in three languages (English, French and German) a speech given by Heinrich von Stephan during the 1874 Berne Congress, at the foundation of the Union.

innumerable reports and accounts – sometimes spanning several issues – providing a composite picture of postal operations within UPU member countries. Mail delivery by kayak in Greenland (L'Union Postale 1877/10), postal training in Africa in the 1960s (Union Postale 1966/3), and postal services operating on Sundays in Latvia (L'Union Postale 1924/5) are among the many snapshots of postal services over the past 150 years. However, beyond their purely factual nature, these articles serve as a reminder that Union Postale has always supported the IB's primary mandate – to connect Union members, by keeping them apprised of postal developments around the world and by reporting on innovations being explored. The information thus benefits all members, supporting their progress and decisions.

Although current content is more likely to focus on generative AI and the global economy than on earlier postal innovations such as pneumatic tube mail systems or zeppelin-borne air mail transport, Union Postale continues to fulfil its mandate by informing readers about developments in the postal sector in five languages. Today the magazine is joined by the Digital Union monthly newsletter, Voice Mail podcast and Postal Matters blog. **VS**

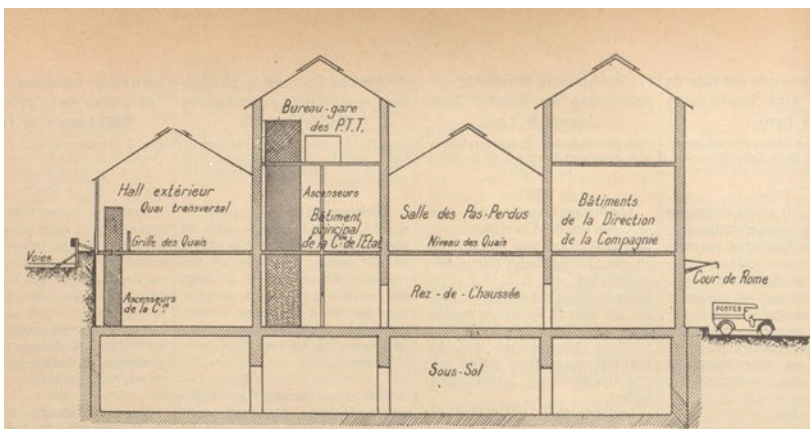


Fig. 1.

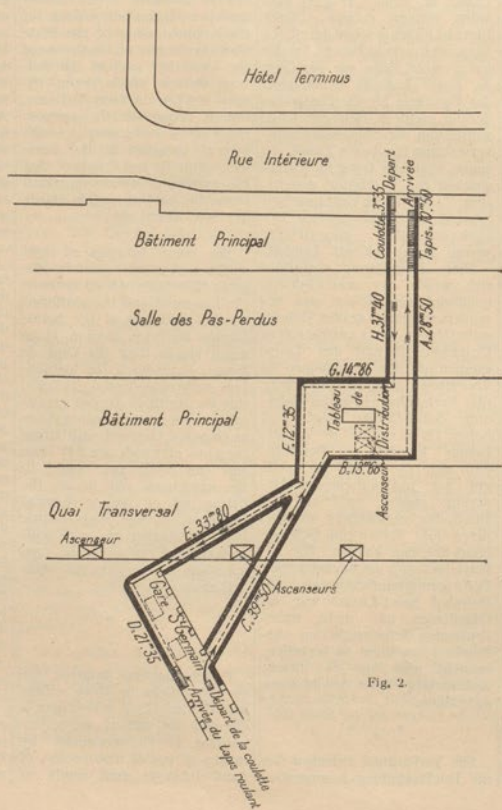
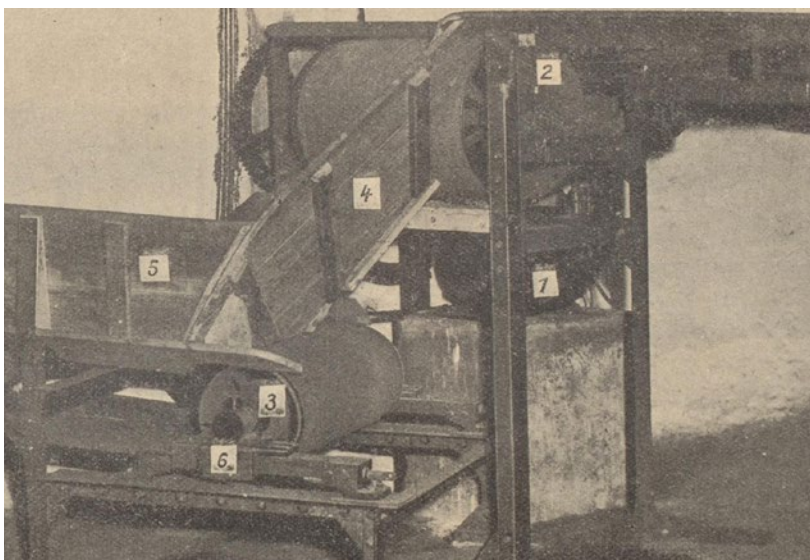


Fig. 2.

Left: First diagram published in L'Union postale 1926/1 related to the article "Transport mécanique des sacs de lettres à la gare Saint-Lazare à Paris »/ »Mechanical Conveyance of Mail-bags in the Saint-Lazare Railway station", "Transporte mecánico de sacos de cartas en la estación de Saint-Lazare de Paris »

A vital testament to the International Bureau's role in connecting Union members, the magazine is more than a conduit for circulars and letters to postal administrations. Between its pages are innumerable reports and accounts – sometimes spanning several issues – providing a composite picture of postal operations within UPU member countries.



Left: Same article continued in L'Union Postale 1926/2, showing the "Tapis de départ"/"Departure Band"/"Tapis de salida" with the first published image

TECHNICAL MULTILATERALISM AND THE UNIVERSAL POSTAL UNION: A BLUEPRINT FOR COOPERATION IN A FRAGMENTED WORLD

Text by RAJEEV VENUGOPAL, PH.D
Canada Post Corporation

As the author of “Delivering Diplomacy: The Universal Postal Union as a Post-Westphalian Construct” in the publication celebrating our Union’s 150th anniversary, I reflected on the UPU as not only a historical construct, but as a practical international framework that supports cross-border interoperability and efficiency in postal operations. Central was the concept of “technical multilateralism,” a functionalist approach to international relations that prioritizes the creation of standardized and non-political protocols that allow the global postal model to function in an interoperable manner regardless of geopolitical frictions. This article seeks to expand our understanding of that concept.

While traditional bodies in the UN system (like the Security Council) often reflect political, economic and ideological power dynamics, technical multilateral bodies such as the UPU focus on the invisible “plumbing” of the global order that requires continual and seamless movement. Such bodies have a specialized mandate and rely on expert-driven and rules-based frameworks. This technocratic modus operandi contrasts with more conventional forms of political multilateralism that focus on broader political or ideological interests. In a philosophical sense, technical multilateralism is a form of international cooperation focused less on what nations believe, and more on how they interact in pursuit of shared goals.

The creation of the UPU by the 1874 the Treaty of Berne happened against the



backdrop of the 1648 Peace of Westphalia and emergence of the modern state system. In a world comprised of sovereign states with defined and defended borders, the founders of our Postal Union prioritized operational rather than territorial integration, thereby making it less threatening to national sovereignty at a time when great powers were rising and falling, and the colonial world order was at an inflection point. By focusing on the emerging Union’s operational mandate, collective transaction costs in moving documents and goods across the globe were lowered, common standards removed friction points, and costs associated with collection, transport and delivery were settled efficiently.

The UPU’s founding principles of freedom of transit, non-discrimination, uniform postal regulations and establishment

of a centralized International Bureau challenged the prevailing norms of international relations. Over its 152 years it has grown from 21 to 192 members, and is responsible for the introduction of standardized tools such as the S10 barcode, electronic advance data, international mail processing centres, the terminal dues remuneration system, Integrated Product, Remuneration, and Quality Plans, etc. As we think about the UPU’s future in this golden age of e-commerce, its role is in areas such as evolving customs and entry regimes; creating more efficient linehaul solutions; building AI tools to ingest mass electronic data to identify security risks; enabling predictive tracking; and so forth. If the designated postal operator is to succeed in a new and fiercely competitive landscape, the global postal network

must also become the backbone of a trusted omnichannel communication infrastructure that participates in non-traditional postal activities such as financial services and digitization authentication.

As a political scientist by training, I find the UPU's technocratic focus its most defining feature, and one that I find compelling. But this is no accident or coincidence. From its earliest days, the Union prioritized the role of postal experts over diplomats. In 1863, the Postmaster General of the United States' postal service Montgomery Blair convened a conference in Paris, inviting postal experts – rather than professional diplomats – from 15 countries to exchange views. That conference and the 1874 Berne Congress were not mere diplomatic gatherings; they were spaces for technical specialists to design a model for international cooperation through standard-setting and emphasis on efficient movement of goods through a shared network. We owe the architects of our Union a debt of gratitude for decoupling the "how" from the "why", and in 2026 if we continue to "stick to our lane" we will succeed moving forward.

As a head of delegation to multiple Congresses and meetings of the Council of Administration and Postal Operations Council, I have noted that most issues considered in our Union fall within a uniquely postal remit and generally steer clear of ideology, thereby avoiding Max Weber's description of politics as the "strong and slow boring of hard wood". Of course, none of the preceding is to suggest that the UPU does not face existential pressures. Technical multilateralism is far from a static set of rules; it is a living, breathing negotiation between its members that is tested daily in the minutiae of our industry. But I am optimistic for the future, and encouraged at how willing Union members have been in responding to issues such as the United States' notice of withdrawal, wholesale reforms to the terminal dues system, the COVID-19 global pandemic, introduction of the European Union's Import Control System Release 2 (which mandates pre-arrival electronic data for postal items going to and through the EU), suspension of the United States' de minimis exemption, and deleterious postal volume erosion into commercial channels.

Technical multilateralism as exemplified by the UPU represents one of the most durable, resilient and successful forms of international cooperation. While other bodies and political unions may be subject to fracture owing to normative or qualitative differences, the UPU's focus on its core mandate gives it singular focus. As nations (and groups of nations that govern themselves collectively through pooled sovereignty constructs) demand more control over their own borders and tax regimes, technocrat-led multilateral bodies allow nations to enforce their specific laws, thereby enhancing rather than diluting their sovereignty. And it is worth noting that nations keep these channels open not out of friendship, but because the cost of being disconnected is often too high to pay.

It is here that the supposed tension between national sovereignty and global connectivity is rendered illusory. Indeed, we can achieve both, provided that our Union is sufficiently resilient to manage inevitable complexities. This leveraging of technical multilateralism can be seen in other UN bodies, such as the International Telecommunication Union, World Health Organization, International Civil Aviation Organization or World Customs Organization, which focus on their own scope-delimited mandates rather than broader geopolitics. In the case of our Union, the ability to maintain postal flows under nearly all circumstances also underscores its humanitarian and pacific role.

Looking to the future, I believe that the UPU must continue operating as a specialized, technical body and invisible bridge that keeps postal items moving throughout the world. It is the "Rosetta Stone" that allows 192 designated postal operators to speak one logistical language so that a letter or package can navigate a complex labyrinth of international borders between any two points on the globe. Technical multilateralism is not some ethereal or anachronistic concept, but rather a blueprint for our future. As we move towards a new world order and era of increased geopolitical competition, the quiet, expert-driven work of the UPU will remain an essential architecture of global inclusion and connectivity, and beacon of hope for effective multilateral cooperation. **RV**



If the designated postal operator is to succeed in a new and fiercely competitive landscape, the global postal network must also become the backbone of a trusted omnichannel communication infrastructure that participates in non-traditional postal activities such as financial services and digitization authentication.

INDIA'S DIGIPIN AND THE FUTURE OF POSTAL ADDRESSING

In the evolving landscape of global e-commerce and logistics, the transition from traditional postal addresses to digitally encoded location references reflects a broader shift in how postal and delivery systems manage geographic information.

Text by TITANI JOSEPH **MKANALUMO**

India's introduction of the Digital Postal Index Number (DIGIPIN) forms part of this wider discussion on digital addressing. Instead of replacing the existing postal code framework, the initiative introduces a geocoded reference system that links physical locations to structured digital identifiers.

India's addressing environment reflects the realities of rapid urbanization, informal settlement patterns and linguistic diversity. Large PIN code coverage areas, dependence on administrative boundaries and reliance on local knowledge can be problematic in contexts where machine readability and automated processing are increasingly important. In response, the Department of Posts, in collaboration with IIT Hyderabad and the National Remote Sensing Centre, developed a geocoded framework designed



to function independently of descriptive address elements.

DIGIPIN assigns a unique 10-character alphanumeric code to locations across India. The system defines a geographic bounding box and subdivides it hierarchically across 10 levels, producing grid cells of approximately 3.8 by 3.8 metres. This level of resolution corresponds to positioning accuracy of commonly available global navigation satellite systems. Each grid cell is identifiable without reference to locality names, landmarks or administrative divisions. Since encoding is derived strictly from latitude and longitude, encoding and decoding can be performed locally without reliance on a central database or continuous network connectivity. In addition, there is no central authority allocating codes and no central registry storing address records.

According to officials of India's Department of Posts, "DIGIPIN is designed as a permanent digital infrastructure, which is independent of administrative boundaries, land-use changes, new buildings, and changes in locality or road names. Future developments like new settlements or infrastructure do not affect the underlying DIGIPIN, making it robust and future-proof."

Agnieszka Urbaniec, Business Development Manager within the UPU International Bureau's Addressing Solutions Programme, notes that DIGIPIN is an interesting development in the broader context of digital addressing. She observes that in many countries, systems based on traditional postcodes continue to function effectively. The codes are widely used for mail delivery, logistics planning, service zoning and dynamic pricing of deliveries.

Thus, more granular location identification systems may serve as complementary tools, particularly in environments where digital integration of services is expanding.

DIGIPIN was introduced within India's digital public infrastructure framework and adopts an Address-as-a-Service (AaaS) model. Through open application programming interfaces (APIs) and publicly available technical documentation, the system allows integration into logistics, government and service-delivery workflows. The approach enables access to structured geographic identifiers through digital interfaces rather than relying solely on static datasets.

"DIGIPIN has been designed to provide a shared digital infrastructure based on open standards, interoperability across sectors, open APIs and AaaS, and a platform for

"DIGIPIN is designed as a permanent digital infrastructure, which is independent of administrative boundaries, land-use changes, new buildings, and changes in locality or road names. Future developments like new settlements or infrastructure do not affect the underlying DIGIPIN, making it robust and future-proof."

Agnieszka Urbaniec

Business Development Manager within the UPU International Bureau's Addressing Solutions Programme

innovation by public and private entities," according to officials of the Department of Posts.

Internationally, the relevance of digital addressing initiatives lies primarily in their interoperability within cross-border postal operations. This emphasizes the importance of access to reliable reference data, including through datasets or APIs, to enable address verification in the context of electronic advance data (EAD), which has become an integral component of customs processing, routing and risk assessment.

The UPU provides addressing data services, including postcode reference databases and API-based validation tools, to support countries and designated postal operators in maintaining consistent, machine-readable address information for operational and EAD purposes. Urbaniec adds that the UPU looks forward to continued dialogue on how emerging systems such as India's DIGIPIN may be integrated into international addressing data frameworks in a manner that supports cross-border interoperability. Thus, consistency and clarity of address elements support operational processing across multiple jurisdictions.

The UPU notes that while national innovations may introduce new technical approaches to address representation, their international dimension depends on how they align with shared data frameworks. International postal exchanges involve one country transmitting EAD to multiple destination operators, each operating within distinct regulatory and technical environments. Structured and interpretable address data supports consistent processing in such exchanges. The UPU's role is thus facilitative rather than prescriptive. There is no single global standard for postal codes, and national addressing systems vary significantly in structure and format. Therefore, the objective is not to promote one model over another but to support interoperability, data quality frameworks and shared technical principles.

"The real risk of fragmentation arises if there is no common understanding of how these systems can function in an international context. It is essential that digital addressing

systems can be mapped, validated and processed consistently across different technical and regulatory environments. If this layer of interoperability is missing, the result could be parallel systems that work well domestically but create complexity in international mail and parcel flows," explains Urbaniec.

With more digital addressing models emerging, particular attention is given to their relationship with EAD requirements. Mechanisms such as standardized APIs and structured validation services are among the tools considered to support this objective, while respecting national governance of address data.

Privacy considerations also remain central to discussions surrounding digital addressing. A distinction is maintained between geographic identifiers and personal data. DIGIPIN encodes geographic coordinates; no personal data needs to be collected to generate a DIGIPIN.

The UPU similarly underscores the importance of ensuring that digital address data is handled within appropriate legal and regulatory safeguards.

"A key principle is that precise digital address information should not, on its own, be used to identify individuals. Address data and personal data serve different purposes, and appropriate legal, technical and regulatory safeguards are necessary to ensure that digital addressing systems are implemented in ways that respect privacy and data protection," emphasizes Urbaniec.

DIGIPIN was released as a foundational digital infrastructure in March 2025, with pilot initiatives launched in January 2026 to explore use cases ranging from municipal service delivery and urban planning, to emergency response and last-mile government communications.

As electronic data becomes central to postal performance, the ability to reference precise, verifiable locations may become an important element in the ongoing evolution of global addressing systems. **TJM**

MARKET DIGEST

by TITANI JOSEPH
MKANALUMO

ALGERIA

ALGERIE POST seeks to pilot a Postal Self-Service Kiosk and Dropbox Lite service through its partnership with imageHolders, the provider of self-service kiosk solutions. The collaboration also includes other institutions, Norafric Technology, Reason Solutions and 3S Pay. The solution is part of the post's digitalization and automation agenda to enhance customer service, increase accessibility and streamline transactions.

The rollout of the kiosks, which will be delivered in May 2026, will allow customers to perform shipping services, drop off parcels and letters and print receipts, confirmation notice and tracking details. The new kiosks feature user-friendly touchscreens and an inclusive design, making them easy for everyone to use, including people with specific access needs.

(Source: postandparcel.info)

BANGLADESH

The Bangladesh Postal Department, **BANGLA POST**, has completed the dispatch of postal ballots to over 767,000 expatriate voters across 121 countries. The large-scale out-of-country-voting operation involved a sophisticated logistics chain that utilised five airlines to ensure delivery to registered voters in regions like Saudi Arabia, Malaysia and Qatar. Among others, the work involved facilitating secure and verifiable delivery for over 1.5 million total registered voters and is part of the post's collaboration with the Bangladesh Election Commission (EC). The post is leveraging its nationwide infrastructure coverage to support national governance and civic participation on a global scale. Bangla Post carried out the operation with assistance from the EC, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Posts, Telecommunications and Information Technology, Civil Aviation Authority, and the five airlines (Biman Bangladesh Airlines, Emirates, Malaysia Airlines, Singapore Airlines, and Saudia Airlines).

(Source: en.bonikbarta.com)

BELGIUM

The **BPOSTGROUP** has rebranded to bnode effective 9 December 2025 in a step to unify the company's identity. The move encompasses bnode's three business units: paxon (3PL), Landmark Global and bpost. The change is said to represent a strategic repositioning from a postal operator with logistics capabilities to a logistical leader that also offers postal services.

The group, which now operates with 31 different brands, each with its own values and positioning, is changing to a four-brand structure to enhance clarity, consistency and commercial impact, enabling customers to easily recognize the full-service range being delivered.

(Source: parcelandpostaltechnologyinternational.com)

CANADA

CANADA POST has proposed a comprehensive transformation plan that details a roadmap to the post's sustainable service delivery. The move comes after the government directed the post to implement changes in response to the changing business environment and to boost its efficiency. The plan proposes converting the remaining households to community mailboxes, modernizing its network of post offices, amending service standards for letter mail and reducing overhead costs. The changes will ensure that postal services remain accessible to all Canadians, particularly those in rural, remote and Indigenous communities. The plan is being guided by five principles: prioritize service to all citizens, proceed thoughtfully to minimise disruptions during the transformation, treat employees with respect, keep Canadians informed of the changes happening and be flexible to adapt the approach to citizen's evolving needs.

(Source: canadapost-postescanada.ca)

COLOMBIA

Colombia's postal service operator, **4-72** and the Department for Social Prosperity have consolidated a working group aimed at defining the guidelines of an inter-administrative agreement that will allow the union of logistical and human capacities for the delivery of markets in the fight against hunger in the most vulnerable regions of the country. The initiative seeks to accelerate the delivery of aid to vulnerable families, leveraging the post's vast coverage and operational capacity. In addition, the collaboration will enable the government to connect territories, transform lives and bring hope to every corner of the country.

(Source: 4-72.com.co)

ETHIOPIA

In a bid to modernize post operations, **ETHIOPOST** has launched two new digital applications, "Virtual Post Box" and "Post Market," as part of its digital strategy and upscaling operations. The apps are poised to reduce trade barriers faced by small and medium enterprises and increase their competitiveness on global markets.

The systems allow post office customers without personal mailbox numbers to use their phone number as a postal address, allowing them to receive instant information on the arrival of their items or messages via their mobile phones. The innovations are integrating modern technology with traditional services leveraging their benefits to enhance efficiency.

(Source: postandparcel.info)

INDONESIA

PT Pos INDONESIA (PERSERO) has launched specialized international cargo services for Indonesian migrant workers and Hajj and Umrah pilgrims. The service is aimed at simplifying shipping from overseas to Indonesia by offering relaxed import duty arrangement, competitive rates and real time air cargo tracking. The postal operator will coordinate with government ministries to ensure customs

compliance and shipment security, a move that is transforming the post service provider from a traditional post into a robust international logistics provider. Apart from supporting the Indonesian diaspora, the service will also strengthen the operator's revenue through integrated, secure and nationwide distribution networks.

(Source: en.antaranews.com)

IRAQ

The **IRAQ POST** is helping its customers save on time and effort by simplifying procedures through the Tasheel application. The development is aimed at simplifying procedures, improving citizens experience, and pave the way for digital transformation in government services. The Tasheel application is a national platform for delivering documents and transactions between citizens and government agencies and institutions via the post. The application will ensure seamless transactions online without requiring customers to physically travel between office departments and endure long waits or have stalled transactions due to forgotten documents. The postal service will securely process received documents and deliver to relevant ministries and return the documents to customers thereafter.

(Source: post.iq)

IRELAND

Ireland's national postal operator, **AN POST** has reached a significant sustainability milestone by reducing its carbon emissions by 50%. The achievement has been realized three months ahead of the projected timeline, placing An Post among the first national postal operators in the world to achieve the target. The reduction was delivered through the operator's €200 million Green Light Strategy, which combines business transformation with environmental sustainability and commercial performance. Around €100 million was invested specifically in decarbonizing operations, resulting in more than half

of delivery routes now being electrified. In addition, 95% of heavy vehicles have transitioned to renewable hydrotreated vegetable oil (HVO) fuel, while 99% of buildings are powered by green energy. An Post is now targeting net zero emissions by 2030 with additional electric vehicles and HVO-fueled trucks, and expanded solar energy across its building planned for the coming years.

(Source: parcelandpostaltechnologyinternational.com)

KENYA

The Postal Corporation of Kenya (PCK), **POSTA KENYA**, is urging the government to expedite the operator's roadmap, termed "PostCap Memo" designed to transform the post into a modern centre for e-commerce and digital finance. The PostCap Memo is founded on three pillars of modernization, PostaPay revolution and asset optimisation. Furthermore, the plan seeks to formalize Posta Kenya's role as a national e-government and e-payment provider, ensuring the post's relevance as an enabler of financial inclusion.

(Source: the-star.co.ke)

MALAYSIA

Pos MALAYSIA has been recognized as a green logistics institution, with three major sustainability awards for its excellence in innovation, energy efficiency and ESG performance. The postal operator was honoured at the Malaysia International Halal Showcase Services Innovation & Sustainability Award 2025 for its "Pos Hijau Carbon Emissions Tool," which allows customers to track carbon emission for every shipment. The award highlighted Pos Malaysia's ambitious electric vehicle (EV) deployment, with more than 1,500 EVs operating across the country, the largest EV fleet in Malaysia's logistics sector. The postal operator also secured the National Energy Awards 2025 for energy management at its Bangi and Seri Kembangan centres. Pos Malaysia further achieved gold at The Edge ESG Awards 2025 in the transportation and logistics category.

(Source: parcelandpostaltechnologyinternational.com)

SYRIA AND JORDAN

SYRIA POST and **JORDAN POST** are moving towards closer cooperation in pursuit of advancing digital transformation. The partnership focuses on e-commerce integration, financial service modernization and the adoption of Jordanian operational technologies to enhance cross-border postal efficiency. By sharing technical expertise and know-how, the pact highlights a regional trend in which the two postal operators aim to improve service efficiency, overcome infrastructure challenges and build a connected and technologically advanced postal network. The initiative reflects a wider regional push towards cooperation, as postal operators seek scalable, technology-driven solutions to support trade and digital service delivery.

(Source: sana.sy)

THAILAND AND LAOS

THAILAND POST and **LAO POST** have partnered to drive the digital economy connectivity across the Thailand, Laos and China corridor. The joint frameworks include sealed and unsealed mailbag exchange systems for air, land and Express Mail Service across the Thai-Lao Friendship Bridges, integrated with Electronic Data Interchange for secure and speedy customs processes. The partnership further expands the cash-on-delivery service (which allows buyers to pay via cash or mobile banking upon delivery of items) and ePacket services to support SMEs and individual sellers. The agreement will further introduce digital finance upgrades, including developing e-wallets and electronic payment channels. In addition, a renewed partnership with Western Union that will support secure, modern and transparent international money transfers. The pact will enforce Thailand Post's role as a logistics leader in Southeast Asia.

(Source: postandparcel.info)

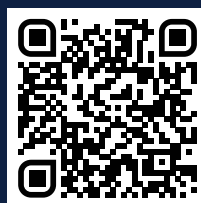
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