



# REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2026–2029

# AFRICA

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# FOREWORD

Today, technological developments and the globalization of trade continue to reshape economies and societies worldwide. As a result, the activities and characteristics of the postal sector have changed profoundly, along with the expectations of society and businesses with regard to postal services. In this evolving environment, our role in facilitating communication across borders is more relevant than ever. Governments must provide the necessary enabling environment and ensure that universal postal services are maintained. In parallel, postal operators around the world must adapt to these shifts and meet the evolving demands through structural reforms, innovative services and continuous modernization.

Supporting our member countries in building resilient and future-ready postal services is central to the UPU's mandate. In this regard, the regional development plan (RDP) constitutes a key document, translating our shared priorities into concrete support at regional level. During the Abidjan cycle, we significantly strengthened our field presence, including doubling the number of regional offices. This demonstrates the high priority we continue to place on development cooperation.

This RDP reflects detailed analyses of the region's current situation and the lessons we learned from the Abidjan cycle. It provides both an overview of the global and regional postal environment, together with a targeted set of development cooperation actions tailored to the needs of the region for the 2026-2029 cycle. I believe that it will serve as a guiding reference for implementing development cooperation in line with the discussions held at the Dubai Congress on regionalization.

As the United Nations specialized agency responsible for postal services, we work closely with our regional partners to identify priorities for development cooperation activities and initiatives. This RDP is therefore the result of an inclusive regional dialogue between us and our stakeholders. Despite present challenges, significant opportunities arise from the continued growth of cross-border e-commerce and trade. By leveraging their extensive networks and trusted reputation, designated postal operators are well placed to support governments in advancing national policy objectives.

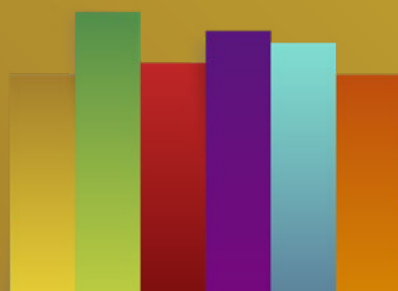
I look forward to strengthening our close cooperation with regional partners as we work together with our 192 member countries to maximize the impact of their socio-economic development efforts and deliver tangible benefits to citizens and businesses across the region.

## **MASAHIKO METOKI**

*Director General of the UPU International Bureau*

CHAPTER 1

# GLOBAL DEVELOPMENTS IN THE POSTAL SECTOR



## GLOBAL TRENDS AND CHALLENGES

The global postal sector is undergoing a profound transformation. Although the world economy grew at an average annual rate of 3.38% between 1996 and 2023, in terms of gross domestic product adjusted for purchasing power parity (GDP PPP), the postal sector recorded slower growth of 2.28% in real revenue. This divergence, commonly referred to as “postal decoupling”, reflects both the structural challenges and the potential of the sector amid digital disruption and evolving customer needs.

Despite the decline in traditional letter mail, the sector has shown resilience through the expansion of e-commerce, logistics and financial services. In 2023, for the first time, global revenue from parcels and logistics (32.5%) surpassed that from letter post (32.4%), marking a pivotal shift in the sector’s economic profile.

### Structural shift in the sector

Postal operators are rapidly transitioning from traditional, letter-dominant service models to integrated networks that encompass parcel logistics, digital services, financial inclusion and public service delivery. This transformation is driven by the need to remain relevant in the digital economy and to respond to the evolving expectations of citizens and businesses. However, the pace and depth of transformation vary greatly across regions. New business models, investment in digital infrastructure, the reskilling of the postal workforce and the establishment of agile regulatory frameworks are essential prerequisites for success.

## Diverging regional dynamics

The trajectory of postal sector development differs markedly between regions, revealing disparities that must be addressed through targeted cooperation:

**AFRICA** is a prime example of postal decoupling: while GDP has climbed steadily over the past 20 years, postal revenue has shrunk by 2.53% per year on average. Key constraints include underinvestment in infrastructure, low mail and parcel volumes, patchy regulation, and slow uptake of electronic advance data (EAD) and digital standards. In many countries, universal service obligations (USOs) are still to be defined, and access to international funding remains limited;

**ARAB COUNTRIES** have shown robust growth in postal revenue, outpacing GDP growth, largely owing to the rapid uptake of financial services and government-backed modernization programmes. Nonetheless, the Arab region faces challenges in addressing cross-border operational fragmentation and in harmonizing regulations for postal and digital services;

the **ASIA-PACIFIC** region has emerged as a global leader in postal innovation. The region boasts strong growth in e-commerce logistics, digital payment systems and postal financial services. However, the pace of growth is uneven, with countries in the region still facing infrastructure and policy bottlenecks that limit last-mile delivery and digital inclusion;

the **CARIBBEAN** has recorded modest economic growth, but postal revenue remains low owing to small market size and high operational costs. Regulatory inconsistency, low digital uptake and limited Post–Customs integration constrain development. There is an increasing need for targeted capacity building and climate-resilient digital transformation efforts;

the **EUROPE AND THE COMMONWEALTH OF INDEPENDENT STATES (CIS)** region shows relatively high levels of service reliability and resilience. However, it faces strong competition, with customer-centric innovation and both exogenous and endogenous regulation among the main challenges. Demographic shifts and labour shortages also pose structural issues for the sustainability of national postal operators;

**LATIN AMERICA** displays moderate economic growth, but postal revenue lags behind. Outdated and fragmented regulatory frameworks, uneven digital adoption and limited investment capacity hinder progress. Demand is rising for capacity building and more coordinated digital transformation strategies.

These divergences underscore the need for tailored intervention, strong regional coordination and continued alignment of UPU-led actions with national strategies.

## Climate, resilience and inclusion

Across all regions, the increase in climate-related disasters, geopolitical tension and pandemics has exposed the vulnerability of postal supply chains. The need to mainstream disaster risk management (DRM), business continuity planning and climate resilience into postal development has become imperative. In parallel, the postal network continues to serve as vital infrastructure for social inclusion, particularly in rural and underserved areas. Postal operators are uniquely positioned to deliver essential services such as social payments, e-government services, digital identification and financial access – reinforcing their role as enablers for the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

## ACHIEVEMENTS AND LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE 2022–2025 CYCLE

Under the Abidjan Postal Strategy, the UPU achieved significant progress:

By the end of the cycle, the majority of planned development cooperation activities had been completed across all regions, reflecting sustained delivery under the Abidjan Business Plan;

Implementation of the UPU's broader strategic priorities advanced consistently across the Council of Administration (CA) and Postal Operations Council (POC) work programmes, as reflected in the progress reports presented during the cycle;

Development cooperation was strengthened through regionalization, with expanded field presence and broadened partnerships with restricted unions and donors, in line with Congress mandates.

Key lessons from this cycle include the importance of strong regional engagement, flexible and diversified funding, and enhanced cross-cutting coordination within the UPU and with member countries – particularly through increased field presence, harmonized project management and improved collaboration with restricted unions.

## STRATEGIC ORIENTATION FOR 2026–2029

The Dubai Business Plan translates the UPU's long-term vision into 38 domain work proposals (DWP), structured around three strategic goals:



GOAL 1

**GOAL 1: LEVERAGE THE SINGLE POSTAL TERRITORY THROUGH AN EFFECTIVE RULES-BASED SYSTEM;**



GOAL 2

**GOAL 2: STRENGTHEN THE GLOBAL POSTAL ECOSYSTEM THROUGH INNOVATION FOR FACILITATING COMMUNICATION AND TRADE;**



GOAL 3

**GOAL 3: ENABLE POSTAL DEVELOPMENT THROUGH ENHANCED COOPERATION AND REGIONALIZATION.**

Among these, the importance of goal 3 is underscored by the fact that it requires the largest share of projected resources, at 133.58 million CHF over the 2026–2029 cycle. This highlights the Union's commitment to ensuring that no member country is left behind.

A core pillar of this commitment is the deepening of regionalization, which now serves not only as a delivery mechanism but as a strategic approach in its own right. Regionalization is no longer limited to field implementation; it is being positioned as a means of co-creation, empowerment and resilience building. Through enhanced regional presence – including the expansion of regional offices, the deployment of field experts, and closer engagement with restricted unions and local stakeholders – the UPU aims to tailor solutions more precisely to the unique needs of each region.

Key proposals such as DWP 27 (Development and cooperation – regionalization and projects), DWP 101 (Development and cooperation – emergency assistance) and DWP 205 (Development and cooperation – regionalization) support this approach by:

- elevating regional offices into centres for technical assistance, policy dialogue and resource mobilization;

- ensuring that regional strategies are shaped with – and not just for – member countries;

- strengthening alignment between regional priorities and global goals, particularly in areas such as digital transformation, financial inclusion, logistics development and regulatory modernization.

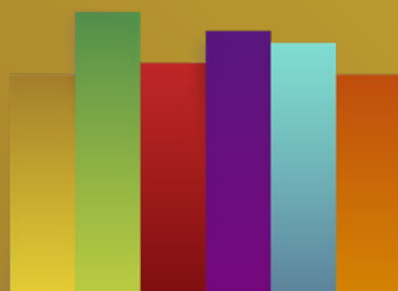
In this way, regionalization is both a structural lever and a political message: development must be regionalized, inclusive and responsive. It reinforces the idea that no solution is truly global unless it is regionally relevant.

This renewed emphasis on region-specific delivery models, combined with the results-based approach of the DWPs through key performance indicators (KPIs), sets the foundation for a more agile, equitable and accountable UPU that is prepared to support its members in navigating uncertainty, embracing innovation and achieving sustainable postal development.

The regional development plan (RDP) for the 2026–2029 cycle will be defined by its responsiveness to regional needs, its emphasis on resilience and sustainability, and its integration with the Dubai Business Plan and the UN SDGs. Chapter 2 will present a detailed regional analysis to guide priority setting and cooperation modalities tailored to each region.

CHAPTER 2

# REGIONAL POSTAL SECTOR ANALYSIS



# OVERVIEW OF THE POSTAL SECTOR IN AFRICA

The UPU's Africa programme covers four subregions – Central, East, Southern and West Africa – and comprises 45 beneficiary countries, all located in sub-Saharan Africa.<sup>1</sup> Among these countries, 28 are classified as least developed countries (LDCs),<sup>2</sup> while 19 are currently considered fragile or affected by conflict. The region also includes six African small island developing states (SIDS),<sup>3</sup> which are particularly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change owing to their geography and limited resources.

Sub-Saharan Africa comprises a highly heterogeneous group of countries with wide variations in income levels, institutional capacity, infrastructure development and geographic characteristics. Many countries face persistent challenges, including limited logistics networks, exposure to climate risks, and governance or security constraints. However, the region also presents significant potential for progress through digitalization and regional economic integration.

## POSTAL DEVELOPMENT PERFORMANCE

Global trends in postal development continue to reveal a challenging landscape for sub-Saharan Africa, despite modest gains in certain areas. According to the 2024 State of the Postal Sector report, Africa's results on the UPU Integrated Index for Postal Development (2IPD) remain significantly below the global median of 43.0, with a regional score of 21.0. This represents an improvement in comparison to previous years but still reflects substantial gaps in network performance, particularly in terms of international connectivity, operational efficiency and digital uptake.

Many countries in the region fall into the lowest postal development levels (PDLs), particularly PDLs 1 and 2, which denote limited operational maturity, constrained service offerings and weak international connectivity. These factors collectively undermine the sector's capacity to support inclusive economic growth and trade. Designated operators (DOs) in Africa have struggled to evolve at the same pace as rising global

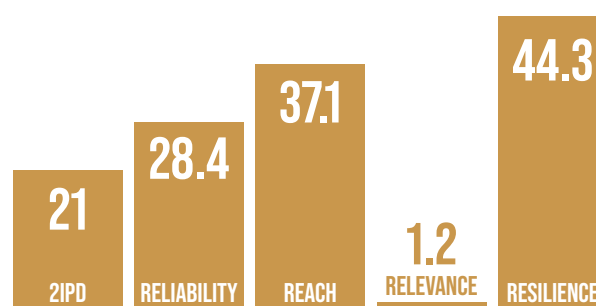
expectations in the areas of e-commerce fulfilment, last-mile delivery efficiency and end-to-end parcel tracking.

Mauritius has emerged as the regional leader in sub-Saharan Africa, achieving a PDL of 7 and a 2IPD score of 56.6, with particularly strong scores in reliability (78.0), reach (60.5) and resilience (66.0). Ghana follows with a PDL of 6 and a 2IPD score of 54.6, demonstrating exceptional performance in reliability (95.2) and a solid resilience score (64.4). The United Rep. of Tanzania ranks third, with a PDL of 6 and a 2IPD score of 49.1, showing strengths in resilience (82.9) and reliability (68.6).

Several African countries have demonstrated remarkable progress in their 2IPD scores from 2023 to 2024. Tanzania recorded the largest gain, improving by 33.18 points, followed by Cabo Verde with a gain of 22.57 points, and Ghana with a gain of 20.73 points. Mauritius, already a regional leader, continued its upward trajectory with a gain of 16.45 points. Other countries making significant improvements include Angola, Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso and Zimbabwe. Additionally, 18 countries successfully moved up in their PDL, while five countries experienced a decline. Mauritius increased its PDL from 5 to 7, Ghana from 4 to 6, and Tanzania from 2 to 6. Other notable improvements include Cabo Verde from 2 to 5, Burkina Faso from 2 to 4, and Angola from 2 to 3. These changes reflect a combination of infrastructure upgrades, improved reliability in service provision, and stronger integration with regional and international logistics networks.

The highest scoring pillar for the Africa region remains resilience, with a median of 44.3. This can be attributed to the diversification of revenue streams, primarily through traditional financial services and postal social services provided by DOs. However, as in previous years, the pillars of relevance, reach and reliability continue to present

### Postal sector performance in the Africa region



<sup>1</sup> The 45 countries of the UPU Africa programme are Angola, Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cabo Verde, Cameroon, Central African Rep., Chad, Comoros, Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Dem. Rep. of the Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Eswatini, Ethiopia, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sao Tome and Principe, Senegal, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, South Africa, South Sudan, Togo, Uganda, United Rep. of Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

<sup>2</sup> LDCs in the Africa programme are Angola, Benin, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Central African Rep., Chad, Comoros, Dem. Rep. of the Congo, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Gambia, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Lesotho, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mozambique, Niger, Rwanda, Senegal, Sierra Leone, South Sudan, Togo, Uganda, United Rep. of Tanzania and Zambia.

<sup>3</sup> SIDS in the Africa programme are Cabo Verde, Comoros, Guinea-Bissau, Mauritius, Sao Tome and Principe, and Seychelles.

considerable challenges, with scores of 1.2, 37.1, and 28.4 respectively, primarily owing to underdeveloped and obsolete postal infrastructure, limited network coverage and low levels of connectivity with international networks.

## KEY DIMENSIONS OF THE POSTAL SECTOR IN AFRICA

### PHYSICAL NETWORK

The African postal network remains a critical component of national infrastructure. As of 2023, the region comprised 11,463 permanent post office facilities, supported by 48,459 staff, including 47,220 full-time personnel. This represents one of the largest public service networks in Africa. Nevertheless, the data shows a sustained contraction in both infrastructure and workforce over the last five years. Between 2019 and 2023, the total number of staff declined by 21.5%, and the number of permanent post offices fell by over 11%, from 12,884 to 11,463.<sup>4</sup>

This contraction reflects broader trends affecting the sector. Domestic letter-post volumes decreased from 590.7 million items in 2021 to 418.3 million in 2023, a drop of 29.2%. Parcel volumes experienced a similar decline, falling by 38.6% over the same period. This decline is attributable to growing digital substitution, the slow pace of modernization and increasing competition from private logistics providers.

From a financial perspective, total operating revenues across the region have declined steadily, from 512.7 million SDR in 2021 to 366.0 million SDR in 2023, representing a 28.6% contraction. This drop illustrates the difficulty in keeping legacy services profitable and the urgent need to pivot toward more diversified and digitally integrated service models. Meanwhile, international letter-post volumes showed moderate growth, increasing by 17.6% between 2021 and 2023, suggesting opportunities in cross-border communication and trade.

Despite this downward trend, the physical postal network continues to deliver essential services to a broad population base. In many African countries, postal outlets are the only formal service infrastructure present in remote areas. They play a central role in financial inclusion, supporting the provision of savings and remittance services and, increasingly, mobile-based financial products. DOs have also been leveraged to distribute government payments, including pensions and social transfers, thus supporting public service continuity and social protection goals.

### DIGITAL NETWORK

Digital transformation across Africa's postal sector has gained new momentum in recent years, as DOs increasingly expand their service offerings into digital commerce, payments and inclusion. Posts are no longer limited to physical mail distribution; they are evolving into multipurpose platforms that enable e-commerce, facilitate financial access and promote social inclusion.

The African postal network, with over 11,000 facilities and close to 50,000 employees, remains uniquely positioned to deliver inclusive digital services. By embedding digital capabilities within their physical footprint and by deepening partnerships with fintech and digital commerce actors, Posts are playing an increasingly central role in the region's digital transformation.

A central strength of postal networks in Africa lies in their broad geographic coverage and community trust. Over 50% of postal outlets are in rural or underserved areas, allowing DOs to bridge connectivity gaps and provide critical digital services where few alternatives exist. Statistics show that 93% of DOs reported offering some form of digital service. In Africa, seven of the top 10 most widespread services have been implemented by more than half of Posts: track and trace (100%), online information on services and tariffs (70%), electronic notification (70%), online contact and customer service (65%), public Internet access points in post offices (57%), electronic remittances (57%), and online lookup (postcodes, addresses, post offices) (52%).<sup>5</sup> As is the case globally, support services are the most widespread category in the region, followed by digital financial and payment services and e-post and e-government.

Postal networks are increasingly recognized as platforms for onboarding underserved populations into national digital ecosystems. Through simple user interfaces and guided support, Posts are contributing to the expansion of digital identities, document exchange and e-commerce participation. In some cases, postal outlets provide basic training and support to help users complete online processes, thereby serving as localized digital inclusion hubs.

In the coming years, digital transformation in the postal sector will require coordinated investment in infrastructure, training and regulatory alignment. Posts must also ensure that digital tools are accessible, secure and adapted to local conditions. As trusted national institutions with an expansive physical reach, DOs remain well-positioned to become engines of digital inclusion – provided they are equipped with the tools and support needed to make that transition meaningful and sustainable.

<sup>4</sup> UPU statistics, 2023.

<sup>5</sup> The digital economy and digital postal activities – a global panorama, UPU, 2019.

## FINANCIAL NETWORK

Across Africa, DOs continue to serve as a critical component of national financial inclusion strategies. Their wide geographic footprint – particularly in rural and underserved areas – gives Posts a distinct comparative advantage over other financial institutions, especially in regions where traditional banks and formal financial service providers are absent or inaccessible. For many citizens, the Post remains the first and often only point of access to essential financial services.

DOs in the region have increasingly assumed a broader role in the delivery of financial services. Money transfers and remittances remain core activities, and there has been a growing focus on expanding the service portfolio to include offerings such as bill payments; savings facilitation; and the disbursement of pensions, subsidies and other government-to-person transfers. In many African countries, postal outlets have become key infrastructure for channelling public funds directly to beneficiaries, particularly during periods of economic stress or social emergency.

These developments reflect a wider recognition of the Post's public service mandate and its ability to reach populations traditionally excluded from formal financial systems. In the context of evolving digital ecosystems, many African Posts are exploring new ways to deliver services through digital channels. Efforts to modernize service delivery include the introduction of mobile-enabled interfaces, digitalized payment systems and enhanced customer service tools.

## SOCIO-ECONOMIC ROLE OF THE POSTAL SECTOR

### Economic impact of the postal sector in sub-Saharan Africa

The postal sector in sub-Saharan Africa remains a significant contributor to socio-economic development through its expansive physical reach, integration into national infrastructure and evolving service offerings. In recent years, DOs have diversified their activities, not only providing communication and logistics services but also playing an increasingly visible role in e-commerce enablement, digital inclusion and social policy delivery.

Across the region, Posts are acting as agents of inclusion for underserved populations, particularly in rural and peri-urban areas. As previously mentioned, over 11,000 postal facilities employ close to 50,000 people across Africa, forming an infrastructure backbone capable of reaching even the most remote communities. This extensive network positions the postal sector as a unique enabler of government services and economic integration. In addition to providing universal postal services, DOs are increasingly engaged in the delivery of essential products and services, including national ID registration, bill payments and e-commerce logistics support. These offerings directly support broader goals of service equity and territorial cohesion.

Africa's current position in global e-commerce remains marginal, accounting for less than 1% of global e-commerce revenue as of 2022. However, the region's trajectory is promising, with its total e-commerce revenue expected to grow from 29 billion SDR in 2022 to nearly 50 billion SDR by 2027, representing an average annual growth rate of 11%.<sup>6</sup> This anticipated expansion reflects growing mobile penetration, an improving digital infrastructure and increasing consumer familiarity with online commerce. Urban markets have mainly fuelled this growth, as rural connectivity and last-mile service provision remain persistent barriers.

Within the region, Nigeria and Namibia are highlighted as illustrative examples of emerging digital commerce ecosystems. Nigeria's NIPOST benefits from a wide network of 4,168 postal service centres, positioning it as a crucial player in enabling nationwide e-commerce coverage. NIPOST is actively modernizing its technological systems, implementing address verification solutions and introducing home delivery and post office boxes to enhance services. NIPOST has established a dedicated business unit for e-commerce activities, aligning with the government's promotion of local products and rural development. The unit provides various e-commerce services, including online buying and selling, last-mile delivery, post office pick-up, reverse logistics, stockholding, and logistics services such as freight, transport, linear and warehousing services.

Namibia offers a valuable case study for smaller markets, where Namibia Post remains dominant in domestic small packets, handling 55% of the volume. Although the market comprises around 100,000 active buyers and a relatively low returns volume, Namibia Post has adapted by partnering with DHL and FedEx for international shipments and with e-commerce platforms such as MyUniversalShop for domestic convenience.

6 Source: Development of Physical Postal Services to Better Reflect E-Commerce Customer Needs in Both the "Below 2 kg" and "Above 2 kg" Markets, UPU, 2023.

Several Posts in Africa have also contributed to the development and leveraging of local economies by creating marketplaces. FasoRanana, launched by La Poste Burkina Faso, serves as an online marketplace and “business city” within Burkina Faso. It provides a platform for Burkinabé artisans and small businesses to showcase and sell their products through virtual storefronts, thereby fostering local economic growth and entrepreneurship. In Zimbabwe, Zimbabweall facilitates trade at three levels: cross-border exports by micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs); overseas purchases from e-sellers; and domestic transactions involving local e-sellers.

Despite regional constraints – including limited logistical infrastructure, inadequate last-mile delivery networks in rural and remote areas, high delivery costs, and low investment in digital tracking and parcel management systems – there are several competitive advantages for which DOs in Africa are recognized. These include strong brand recognition, extensive physical networks, and relative affordability of services compared to sector alternatives. These characteristics position DOs as trusted intermediaries for e-commerce. However, realizing this potential will require redefinition of products, restructuring of delivery models, and alignment with international standards for cross-border logistics and digital integration.

For Africa, where a large share of the population is engaged in informal or micro-enterprise activities, e-commerce represents a unique opportunity to reach new customers and scale operations. But this opportunity can only be realized if the logistics infrastructure – both physical and digital – is made accessible, affordable and trustworthy. Digital inclusion in this sense requires a whole-of-system approach, where digital skills training, infrastructure investment, postal innovation and trust-building measures are all coordinated.

Financial inclusion remains a core driver of postal sector relevance. National postal networks have become instrumental in advancing financial inclusion across sub-Saharan Africa, particularly because of their extensive geographic coverage and entrenched presence in rural and underserved communities. By offering access to financial services such as savings accounts, remittances, payments and, increasingly, microinsurance and digital financial solutions, postal networks function as gateways into the formal economy for millions who would otherwise remain excluded.

From an economic standpoint, the contributions of postal networks are significant. According to the UPU report *Global Panorama on Postal Financial Inclusion 2023*, in Africa, 97% of Posts are engaged in the provision of financial services, and the postal

sector in many cases surpasses the banking sector in its geographic reach. This ubiquity allows postal networks to mobilize savings, facilitate domestic consumption and channel remittances, all of which have critical multiplier effects on local economies.

Digital financial services (DFS) provided by African DOs remain a cornerstone of inclusive financial access across the region. With their wide territorial reach, embedded community presence and historical role as trusted institutions, DOs are uniquely suited to reach the unbanked and underbanked, particularly in rural areas where commercial banks are scarce or absent. As the digital transformation accelerates, Posts in Africa are increasingly integrating technology into financial service delivery, although challenges remain in terms of infrastructure, regulation and system interoperability.

Remittance services are the most widely offered digital financial product by African DOs, with 89% providing domestic and international remittance services. In 2021, they processed an estimated 7.5 billion USD in domestic and 2 billion USD in cross-border remittances. Though Posts globally handle only 0.91% of the international remittance market, their reach in Africa, especially in rural areas, makes them a vital lifeline for household economies. Government-to-person payments, such as pensions and social transfers, are offered by 82% of African Posts and represent a key revenue stream. During the COVID-19 pandemic, 25% of Posts globally disbursed social welfare payments for the first time, and one-third offered doorstep delivery, highlighting the critical role of Posts in times of crisis.<sup>7</sup>

Bill payments are provided by 71% of Posts and are evolving from over the counter to digital formats. Mobile money services are offered by 43%, though only 51% of Posts are connected to national payment systems, limiting digital integration. Savings accounts are available through 39% of Posts, serving around 52 million accounts in Africa. Overall, financial services generate 30% of total postal revenue in Africa – the highest of any region – underscoring their strategic importance for both financial inclusion and institutional sustainability.<sup>8</sup>

The report entitled *Postal Networks: A Platform for Financial Inclusion Enablement*, published by the UPU under the Financial Inclusion Technical Assistance Facility (FITAF) programme,<sup>9</sup> highlights that the African postal sector plays a vital role in serving unbanked and underserved populations, particularly in rural and hard-to-reach areas. Numerous countries have actively participated in DFS strategy and technical assistance projects. Among them, Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Nigeria, Rwanda and Tanzania

7 Source: Global Panorama on Postal Financial Inclusion 2023, UPU.

8 *ibid.*

9 FITAF provides technical assistance to 20 postal operators globally. It supports postal operators in digitalizing their financial services to better meet the needs of low- and moderate-income populations. The study was made possible with funding from the UPU FITAF, which was created in 2017 with funding and support from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and Visa Inc.

engaged in or proposed FITAF-supported initiatives to deploy or scale postal digital financial services.

In Rwanda, FITAF supported the transformation of the national postal network into an intermediary financial service provider. The strategy focused on integrating Rwanda Post's services into national payment systems, enabling it to act as an agent for banks and mobile money operators.

In Benin and Burkina Faso, FITAF initiatives facilitated integration with the GIM–UEMOA regional payment system. Posts in both countries deployed mobile wallets and debit card services tied to this interoperable platform, creating a shared financial service ecosystem across West Africa.

In Botswana, the FITAF project consisted of developing a consolidated postal digital platform and a mobile super app capability to support the Post's neo-banking ambitions in order to better serve customers centrally through multiple digital community banking offers and propositions. These developments allowed customers in remote communities to participate in formal financial systems for the first time, demonstrating how regional integration can be a catalyst for inclusion.

In Tanzania, the Post aims to create a mobile-based wallet solution for rural underserved communities, particularly women and MSMEs, and to integrate multiple digital payment services through a single mobile wallet. These interventions have had tangible impacts, particularly in areas where formal banking institutions have little or no presence.

The transformation of postal networks into “phygital” infrastructure – combining physical presence with digital capabilities – presents a significant opportunity for advancing inclusive financial and relevant social services, according to the *Study on Post–Fintech Partnerships to Overcome Gender Inequality Through Access to Postal Digital Financial Services*, published by the UPU in 2024. By partnering with fintech companies, African postal services can expand their role beyond traditional mail handling into platforms for mobile money, small loans, savings products, and payment facilitation for online commerce.

Some African Posts have already ventured into fintech–Post partnerships: Posta Kenya's PostaPay wallet enables customers to instantly send and receive money domestically and internationally through its electronic funds transfer service, featuring lower transfer fees than competitors, achieved through its partnership with Sasapay. BotswanaPost's partnership with Mobile Vend allows street vendors to offer BotswanaPost products and services (notably, 78% of the active users of Mobile Vend are women). In Cameroon, the Ministry of Posts

and Telecommunications, in partnership with Cameroon Postal Services (CAMPOST) and fintech company eTranzact, launched a national electronic payments platform. The initiative is designed to promote financial inclusion, accelerate the growth of the digital economy, and enhance regulatory efforts against money laundering and terrorist financing. CAMPOST has been entrusted with hosting and managing this platform, positioning the national DO as a central actor in the country's financial services infrastructure and digital economy architecture.

In the same vein, the UPU's 2023 report entitled *Posts as Enablers of MSME Payment Digitalization* highlights that the African postal sector holds significant promise in supporting MSMEs through inclusive digital financial services. The report pinpoints that African DOs are already global leaders in offering digital payment services, with 39% providing such services.

The report notes that Posts are widely trusted, physically accessible, and embedded in communities, making them well suited to bridge the divide between informal MSMEs and formal financial services. Posts also typically offer a wide range of services from a single physical location, allowing MSMEs to access delivery, payment and financial services under one roof.

Another action worthy of mention, as it illustrates the versatility of national postal networks, is Post4Health, a transformative initiative led by the UPU. Under this initiative, BotswanaPost aimed to strengthen healthcare logistics and improve access to essential medical supplies in remote and underserved areas of Botswana. Aligned with the country's National Development Plan and Vision 2036, the project leverages BotswanaPost's vast delivery network and introduces advanced cold-chain and vehicle tracking technologies to ensure the safe, efficient transport of medicines and vaccines. By integrating healthcare delivery into its universal service mandate, BotswanaPost highlights the evolving social role of postal services as enablers of inclusive national development. The initiative also underscores the importance of strategic partnerships among public institutions, development agencies and the private sector, demonstrating how collaboration can drive resilient, equitable and climate-conscious health systems.

The economic impact of the postal sector in Africa is growing in depth and breadth. DOs are no longer limited to mail delivery and have evolved into multifunctional service providers. Through partnerships, innovation and the strategic use of their physical and digital networks, Posts are delivering measurable contributions to national economies and regional development, particularly in support of the most vulnerable populations.

# DEVELOPMENTS IN POSTAL SERVICES AND THEIR SOCIO-ECONOMIC ROLE IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

## Market dynamics

International postal exchanges have undergone significant stress, driven by the COVID-19 pandemic, changes in consumer behaviour, global e-commerce restructuring and shifts in international logistics. Africa stands out as a region that has been disproportionately affected, with both international and intra-African postal flows showing some of the steepest declines recorded globally. Inbound traffic from Europe to Africa declined by an alarming 85% between 2019 and 2023, while intra-African flows contracted by 83.8%.<sup>10</sup>

Operating revenue decreased significantly, from around 512.7 million SDR in 2021 to 366 million in 2023, a decline of approximately 146.8 million SDR or 28.6%. This drop in revenue is directly related to declining mail volumes. Domestic letter-post items fell by about 29.2%, as digital alternatives continue to displace physical correspondence across the region. The ongoing reduction in the workforce (-13.5%) reflects organizational downsizing and may signal efforts by DOs to manage costs or restructure operations in response to falling demand for traditional services. A notable exception to these downward trends is seen in international letter-post dispatches, which increased by about 17.6%, from 10.8 million items in 2021 to 12.7 million in 2023. In contrast, domestic parcel volumes experienced a substantial decline of nearly 38.6%, falling from 3.46 million in 2021 to 2.12 million in 2023, and international parcels (dispatch) declined by about 40% in the same period.

This is particularly significant given global expectations around parcel growth fuelled by e-commerce. The volume dip seen in sub-Saharan Africa between 2021 and 2023 is consistent with the observation that parcel growth is disproportionately concentrated in regions with stronger infrastructure, Internet access and integration into global supply chains. This highlights the structural barriers, stemming from a “complex interplay of factors, including economic volatility, inadequate infrastructure, regulatory hurdles, and logistical constraints”,<sup>11</sup> preventing some African markets from capitalizing on the e-commerce surge.

Despite notable progress in expanding services and embracing digital transformation, DOs in Africa continue to face several structural and operational challenges. Reliability and speed of delivery remain uneven, and access to postal services is still limited for large portions of the population. Home delivery remains very low in the region, with door-to-door services available only in selected urban centres, reducing the convenience and competitiveness of the Post. Furthermore, digitalization levels vary widely across the region, with some DOs still lacking the core systems required to support scalable digital services. At the same time, Posts face growing competition from private courier companies and digital-native platforms that are reshaping customer expectations and eroding traditional revenue streams.

## Universal service obligation and regulatory frameworks

The USO defines the commitment of governments and DOs to guarantee access to essential postal services for all segments of the population, regardless of geographic location, socio-economic status or digital capability. Across the Africa region, there is significant heterogeneity in how the USO is defined, implemented and financed. Although most African countries maintain formal recognition of the USO within their postal legislation, the practical scope of services covered and the institutional arrangements for monitoring compliance vary widely. In some cases, the USO is articulated in outdated legal frameworks that do not fully account for the evolution of postal services beyond traditional mail delivery. Few countries in the region have established dedicated compensation mechanisms to support DOs in delivering in non-profitable areas. As a result, it is a major challenge to maintain service quality in remote areas, especially where operational costs are high and revenue streams are limited.

In Africa, postal regulation either remains embedded within the structure of the ministries of Posts and telecommunications – a common model in the countries of East and Southern Africa – or exists as an independent regulatory authority responsible for the regulation of postal and telecommunication services, as is generally the case in West and Central Africa. The current challenges in postal transformation in Africa, including electronic data interchange (EDI), cross-border e-commerce, and the interoperability of digital financial platforms, require updated regulatory tools and coordination with other sectors such as telecommunications, transport and finance in order to ensure equitable access to physical, digital, financial and social services that are increasingly integrated into the mission of the modern Post.

<sup>10</sup> Source: UPU Think Tank Brief No. 3/2024, “Trends and Drivers of International Postal Exchanges: A Regional Corridor Analysis”.

<sup>11</sup> *ibid.*

## Evolution of key postal statistics for Africa

Items	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
<b>Total number of staff</b>	61,729	58,848	56,968	52,866	48,459
<b>Number of full-time staff</b>	58,859	56,265	54,578	51,442	47,220
<b>Number of part-time staff</b>	2,870	2,583	2,390	1,444	1,239
<b>Total number of permanent post offices</b>	12,884	12,526	12,437	10,892	11,463
<b>Number of permanent offices staffed by administration officials</b>	8,076	7,843	7,808	7,386	7,015
<b>Number of permanent offices staffed by personnel outside the administration</b>	4,808	4,683	4,629	3,506	4,448
<b>Operating revenues (SDR)</b>	634,852,514	504,444,694	512,746,884	429,447,297	365,959,899
<b>Number of letter-post items, domestic service</b>	802,944,984	614,723,911	590,719,526	533,242,060	418,278,109
<b>Number of letter-post items, international service – dispatch</b>	77,232,316	26,112,640	10,834,504	9,848,339	12,744,173
<b>Number of parcels, domestic service</b>	4,495,964	4,772,562	3,461,573	2,036,314	2,123,862
<b>Number of parcels, international service – dispatch</b>	323,382	250,409	308,189	185,748	182,404

## Supply chain integration

The global UPU postal supply chain is facing unprecedented challenges in maintaining a seamless, flexible and secure network. New security threats, including the latest risks from improvised incendiary devices and improvised explosive devices, are forcing DOs to update safety protocols and adapt to evolving legal frameworks (the European Union has introduced the first framework, with others expected to follow).

At the same time, the shift from traditional business-to-consumer (B2C) models to more complex business-to-business-to-consumer (B2B2C) models, along with a growing emphasis on cargo transport over conventional mail, requires more flexible logistics solutions and the involvement of new wider postal sector players, regardless of the mode of transport.

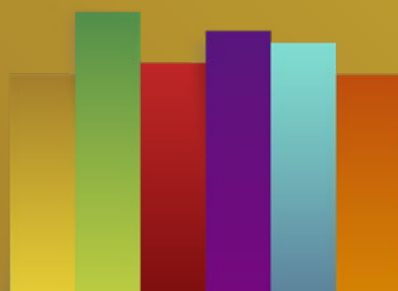
Adding to the complexity are stringent EAD requirements for risk assessment, transport, customs and fiscal processes. These require Posts in the country of origin to exchange information with carriers, Customs and destination Posts before the handover of mail for international transport.

The trend toward lowering or eliminating de minimis thresholds for customs clearance in many countries is placing additional strain on the system. Political challenges, from armed conflicts to rising taxes, further compound the situation.

As a result, the supply chain has become both a critical challenge and a lifeline for DOs, helping them stay competitive in an increasingly dynamic global market.

# CHAPTER 3

# EVALUATION AND LESSONS LEARNED



## EVALUATION OF REGIONAL PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

During the Abidjan cycle, the UPU adopted a regional and cross-cutting approach that allowed for more efficient implementation of activities. In the Africa region, the roll-out of the 2022–2025 development cooperation strategy resulted in significant progress, with 226 out of 294 planned activities implemented by December 2024, representing a completion rate of 77%. Overall, 76% of the financial resources allocated to the Africa programme were devoted to improving the delivery performance of DOs. Among the key initiatives, the regional project on operational efficiency and e-commerce development (ORE 3) stands out as a flagship interaction. The prioritization of the delivery performance of DOs has focused on supporting the modernization of postal infrastructure in least developed countries and bridging development gaps across countries. These efforts have empowered DOs to keep pace with rapid technological advancements, shifting market demands, and increasing quality of service expectations.

The UPU implemented regional postal development projects in collaboration with the African Telecommunications Union and restricted unions, including the Communications Regulators' Association of Southern Africa (CRASA), the Conference of Posts and Telecommunications of Central Africa (COPTAC), the East African Communications Organization (EACO), the Pan African Postal Union (PAPU), the Southern Africa Postal Operators Association (SAPOA), the West African Postal Conference (WAPCO), ARCTEL (Associação de Reguladores de Comunicações e Telecomunicações da CPLP) and AICEP (International Association of Portuguese-Speaking Communications).

The regional development projects were structured around the following priority areas:

**Governments:** reduce disparities in postal development through increased investment and focused policies, while promoting various ways to use the postal network for socio-economic development;

**Regulators:** harmonize and enhance the postal sector's regulatory framework;

**Designated operators:** enhance operational performance by implementing diversified business strategies and continuous process improvements;

**Other public institutions and private sector stakeholders:** promote integration with the postal sector by actively engaging with traditional stakeholders and vice versa, thereby opening up the market, fostering partnerships and enhancing the UPU's role.

In line with these priorities, the key achievements and practical implementation of the regional projects are highlighted below.

### Improvement of DO delivery performance

Since 2022, the UPU International Bureau (IB) has prioritized enhancing e-commerce readiness and improving quality of service performance through regional workshops, technical evaluations and targeted interventions. Support has been extended to the Africa region, particularly least developed countries (LDCs), landlocked developing countries (LLDCs) and small island developing states (SIDS), through the provision of essential postal equipment to address logistical gaps. In addition, comprehensive training has been delivered to postal staff in key areas such as remuneration systems, EAD, addressing, postal security and quality of service.

The ORE 3 project has played a pivotal role in strengthening e-commerce readiness by offering training, technical assistance and digital tools. These efforts have led to tangible improvements in parcel handling, customs clearance processes and last-mile delivery. Regional workshops and field missions under this initiative have fostered collaboration and facilitated knowledge exchange among DOs.

A core component of ORE 3 has been on-site process reviews conducted by field experts, complemented by the appointment of regional project facilitators. This has helped establish a growing network of technical experts providing localized support. Participating DOs had concrete action plans with clearly defined targets to be achieved by December 2025.

Transportation-related initiatives have also received considerable attention. Projects have focused on building a more flexible international transport network, enhancing supply chain resilience, and improving the operational efficiency of regional hubs. As part of this, a dedicated transport think-tank team in Africa has been established to drive innovation and strategic planning in transport management.

Key performance indicators	2021 base-line	2025 target	2025 actuals	Variation (2021-2025)
1 Increase the number of DOs having implemented diversified strategies and operational improvements (new physical and remote process reviews)		45	26	26
2 Increase the number of countries (DOs) in the region using up-to-date tracking systems (IPS, IPS.post, IPS Cloud) (minimum target)	40	45	38	-2
3 Increase the number of countries (DOs) in the region using an electronic customs declaration system (CDS, CDS.post) (minimum target)	35	40	37	2
4 Increase the number of countries (DOs) in the region participating in the GMS module for incoming or end-to-end (minimum target)	35	40	23	-12
5 Improve the global end-to-end average number of days from posting/collection to attempted/ unsuccessful physical delivery/ final delivery (EMA – EMH/EMI) for parcels, registered mail and tracked items (minimum target)	38.46	10	28.1	-10.36
6 Improve the global on-time end-to-end service performance rate for EMS (minimum target)	16.6	70	72	55.4
7 Improve the percentage of items delivered on time based on Leg 3 validated standards for parcels	20.6	95	13	-7.6
8 Increase the number of operators providing all mandatory EMSEVT V3 tracking events for parcels, registered mail and tracked items	14	40	37	23
9 Increase the number of countries (DOs) in the region exchanging item at-tribute pre-advice, including electronic representation of customs declarations with postal partners using ITMATT messages (minimum target)	32	40	35	3
10 Improve the scanning performance of receptacles with a response in RESCON as a percentage of the receptacles pre-advised in PRECON – results calculated by the sender of the RESCON message (RESCON over PRECON)	64.66	90	70.8	6.14
11 Improve the scanning performance of dispatches to an individual operator for which a response to dispatch (RESDES) was provided, as a percentage of all dispatches for which a pre-advice of dispatch (PREDES) was sent (RESDES over PREDES)	99.67	95	70.1	-29.57

<b>12 Improve the percentage coverage of PREDES versus ITMATT messages for items containing goods</b>	37.68	95	92.3	54.62
<b>13 Increase the number of DOs with pi-lot/operational EAD solutions for transport to PLACI destinations (CARDIT with AR flag)</b>	17	30	33	16
<b>14 Increase the number of DOs and carriers participating in UPU compliance reporting and meeting the expected compliance standards</b>	35	40	35	0
<b>15 Increase the number of DOs having updated their online letter-post, parcels and customs compendia at least once every six months</b>		40	24	24
<b>16 Increase the number of DOs having provided or updated information on prohibitions and restrictions</b>		40	26	26
<b>17 Increase the number of DOs using the electronic consignment security declaration (eCSD)</b>	1	10	6	5
<b>18 Increase the number of DOs benefiting from Quality of Service Fund projects to improve quality of service with regard to critical components of the supply chain network, measured through the number of new projects approved annually</b>	4	10	22	18
<b>19 Increase the number of countries (DOs) in the region having achieved UPU certification in quality of service management (minimum target)</b>	0	10	3	3
<b>20 Increase the number of countries (DOs) in the region having achieved UPU certification in addressing (minimum target)</b>	10	20	8	-2
<b>21 Increase the number of countries (DOs) in the region having achieved UPU certification in postal security (minimum target)</b>	0	10	9	9
<b>22 Increase the number of DOs having implemented integrated e-commerce solutions/APIs</b>		10	9	9

Security remains a top priority, with the UPU conducting certification review missions led by UPU experts, regional project managers and field experts. These missions were preceded by preparatory work carried out by DOs, supported by the UPU’s project teams. As a result, Botswana, Eswatini, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Tanzania and Zimbabwe have successfully achieved certification in accordance with the S58 and S59 postal security standards.

In particular, the targeted procurement of postal equipment for LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS has helped to address critical logistical and operational gaps, thereby reinforcing the overall impact of these interventions.

One of the milestone achievements in advancing postal development has been the launch of the Postal Leaders Forum. Introduced in 2023, this initiative established a unique platform that has attracted considerable interest, particularly among CEOs of DOs. The forums have also drawn senior decision makers from regulatory authorities, government ministries and postal sector players (including international organizations).

Successful postal leadership forums have been organized in Africa, including the first postal leaders forum, held in Côte d’Ivoire; the second postal leaders forum for regulators in Africa, held in Kenya in 2025; as well as a dedicated leaders forum for SIDS, held in Seychelles in 2024.

As noted in chapter 2, the Africa region includes 28 LDCs, whose DOs face institutional, operational, political and financial challenges. The UPU special account for LDCs has helped to improve postal development in those countries, in accordance with regional priorities. In 2024, a project funded under the LDC special account, focusing on capacity building for mail quality improvement in LDCs in the Africa and Arab regions, was carried out to address two key challenges: digital reach and capacity building. Procurement of a minimum viable standard equipment package and the organization of five training workshops were the main components of this project. The chosen equipment package was specifically selected on the basis of the fact that existing IT tools and electronic information exchanges between DOs and external partners, such as airlines and Customs, fall short in supporting e-commerce development. Equipment and systems require upgrading to meet EDI requirements, enhance mail visibility and ensure end-to-end reliability.

## POSTAL SECTOR MODERNIZATION

Within the framework of dedicated regional projects, the UPU has implemented a range of development and cooperation activities to assist member countries in Africa with the drafting of their national postal policies and postal regulatory frameworks.

The validation and adoption of a harmonized postal regulatory framework for Africa, following the mapping of postal sectors and regulatory agencies, has established a new environment for the postal sector to address emerging challenges, evolving market conditions, technological developments and e-commerce requirements.

Using the Integrated Postal Reform and Development Plan (IPDP) methodology, the IB has successfully engaged with governmental authorities and national actors in Africa to implement postal sector modernization projects, including support for digitalization activities at the national level, formulation and implementation of postal policies and regulatory frameworks, and delivery of targeted training programmes.

Through these initiatives, the UPU has developed a white paper on the financing of the postal sector in Africa, with the aim of shedding light on the key issues affecting postal development. In particular, the paper examines the range of financing mechanisms available to the sector and the conditions that must be met to mobilize resources and address identified financing needs.

## DISASTER RESILIENCE

The Disaster Resilience Fund (DRF) has financed 36 projects globally since 2018, with a total budget of 2,057,100 CHF. The projects have covered business continuity plans, staff training, and DRM equipment procurement. The Africa region has benefited from 13 projects, representing 36% of all projects. A regional workshop for Africa was held in Tanzania to build capacity in DRM-related activities.

Under the Emergency and Solidarity Fund (ESF), the UPU has supported several restoration projects following disasters, with countries like the Central African Rep., Kenya, Madagascar, Malawi and Tanzania benefiting from this initiative. The UPU’s goal is to continue to assist DOs in post-disaster situations and to help them build their capacity to restore and resume postal services as quickly as possible.

## CAPACITY BUILDING

The continuous development of human resources capabilities has been a key driver of growth in the postal sector. Training programmes and capacity-building initiatives have equipped postal staff with the necessary skills to manage and deliver modern postal services effectively.

Throughout the Abidjan cycle, a full suite of UPU capacity development solutions was implemented, including workshops, individual training and e-learning courses. These workshops, conducted both in person and remotely, focused on critical skills gaps such as

operational readiness, EAD implementation, postal security, postal remuneration and transportation.

A key tool for strengthening capacity building across member countries in Africa during the Abidjan cycle was Trainpost. Enhancements to Trainpost include the launch of a new mobile application that supports offline learning in response to Internet coverage issues in Africa and elsewhere. The platform has seen increased enrolment from Africa, particularly in courses related to DRM, postal security and other priority topics. A total of 45 Trainpost tutors were trained across Africa as part of efforts to streamline and enhance training within DOs by facilitating easier access to the platform for other postal staff within their respective organizations.

The strategic focus on regionalization and sustainability has shaped the approach to capacity building. This has led to the establishment of regional pools of experts in technical domains such as security, transportation, UPU technology and e-learning. These regional experts, drawn from member countries, have played a critical role in decentralizing expertise and strengthening national ownership of technical assistance projects.

## COOPERATION AND PARTNERSHIPS

Throughout the implementation of RDPs, the regional approach has remained a central pillar for all field activities supporting member countries in Africa. It has served as the main mechanism for delivering targeted assistance, aligned with national and regional priorities. The execution of UPU activities has been streamlined through strong collaboration between the IB, field offices and the restricted unions, reinforcing the regionalization strategy and enhancing project ownership at the national level.

The UPU's field activities have been strongly supported by regional stakeholders and donor member countries. This support has come through joint funding mechanisms, the provision of technical experts and logistical assistance, and sponsorship of regional events and field offices by host countries. These contributions have strengthened operational effectiveness and enhanced the delivery of technical assistance in the field.

A broad range of partnerships has also been established with regional and international organizations. The UPU maintains active cooperation agreements and memoranda of understanding with all restricted unions in Africa. In addition, similar agreements have been signed with other regional bodies, including the African Telecommunications Union, further expanding the network of strategic partnerships essential for successful field activity implementation.

Relations with regional actors – particularly the restricted unions – have played a pivotal role in supporting development and cooperation efforts. PAPU, which hosts the UPU regional office for East Africa, took a

lead role in organizing technical workshops, forums and the Regional Strategy Forum during the cycle. The IB regularly convened meetings with the heads of restricted unions during CA sessions to promote consultation, coordination and strategic alignment. Restricted unions in Africa have been active and consistent participants in these engagements.

In the area of capacity building, the UPU partnered with PAPU, CRASA and EMSP to establish regional capacity-building centres. The UPU has provided these centres with necessary equipment, furniture and other logistical support to ensure their effective functioning. These centres serve as platforms for regional training, knowledge sharing and institutional strengthening.

The IB has also actively participated in numerous events organized by restricted unions and other regional bodies. These joint engagements have created valuable opportunities for the UPU to access regional forums and networks, promote its strategic vision, and foster stronger stakeholder relationships across Africa.

As part of the development process for the Dubai Postal Strategy, the IB organized a series of regional strategy forums to solicit feedback from member countries. These forums were held in collaboration with host country authorities and ensured inclusive and representative input from all regions, thereby contributing to a well-informed and collectively owned global postal strategy.

Wider postal sector players, through the UPU Consultative Committee, have contributed to the development of the postal sector in Africa by actively participating in UPU events and providing financial and technical support to initiatives such as the leaders forums. They have also partnered with DOs to deliver solutions in logistics, e-commerce and last-mile delivery, while collaborating with restricted unions like PAPU to strengthen engagement and foster strategic partnerships with DOs.

## FINANCIAL SERVICES

The Africa region has continued to play a significant role in advancing financial inclusion, benefiting particularly from the UPU's FITAF. During the Abidjan cycle, seven projects were implemented under this initiative, with Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Rwanda, Tanzania and Togo emerging as key beneficiaries. Through FITAF, the UPU has supported eligible member countries in modernizing their financial services by introducing digitally enabled solutions such as digital payments and savings products, making financial services more accessible to underserved populations, including rural communities, women and youth.

# CHALLENGES AND LESSONS LEARNED

## Institutional issues

### REGULATORY AND POLICY ADAPTATION

One of the most pressing challenges facing the postal sector in Africa is the inadequate adaptation of policy and regulatory frameworks to meet the evolving needs of the industry. In many countries, postal regulations have not kept pace with technological advancements, shifting market dynamics and growing consumer expectations.

A significant issue is the failure by some countries to update their postal policy and regulatory frameworks, resulting in a range of problems. In particular, the absence of clear and current regulations has contributed to the proliferation of unlicensed operators, creating unfair competition and undermining the integrity of national postal systems. In addition, customs delays remain a recurring challenge, often owing to a lack of regulatory coordination between postal and national customs authorities.

The lack of harmonized regulatory frameworks across African countries continues to hinder regional integration and the coordinated development of the postal sector. Many national frameworks remain outdated or misaligned with related sectors such as logistics, e-commerce and financial services, limiting the ability of DOs to offer innovative, integrated solutions.

Moreover, weak regulatory oversight exacerbates these challenges, with many countries lacking mechanisms to monitor, evaluate and enforce compliance. This has led to inconsistent service quality and limited accountability for regulatory performance. Compounding this is the absence of tools to measure the effectiveness of regulatory interventions, making it difficult to track progress or identify areas for improvement.

Another major concern is an unclear definition of postal services, especially in relation to emerging services like e-commerce and logistics. Without a well-defined scope, it becomes challenging to regulate new market players or ensure consistent service standards. Political and legal constraints, such as limited political will, outdated legal frameworks and inflexible procedures (e.g. 30-day response time for claims), further weaken the sector's responsiveness to market needs and hinder reforms that could modernize the regulatory landscape.

### GOVERNANCE AND HUMAN RESOURCES LIMITATIONS

DOs in Africa continue to face significant challenges related to governance, human resources development and institutional capacity. One of the most visible issues is the high turnover of staff at managerial levels, which undermines institutional continuity and strategic direction. Coupled with less attractive working conditions, the sector struggles to retain top talent, with many experienced professionals being absorbed by the private sector. This deprives DOs of the technical expertise required to address operational challenges, implement digital transformation, and respond to evolving, market-driven service demands.

Widespread skills gaps further intensify the problem. Many postal staff lack knowledge and skills in key areas such as digital operations, logistics and customer service, which are essential for modern postal services. In addition, succession planning and leadership development remain lacking across many organizations. The absence of structured change management frameworks limits the ability of these organizations to adapt to reforms and implement strategic plans effectively.

### POLITICAL INSTABILITY IN SOME COUNTRIES

Political instability poses a major obstacle to postal sector development in several African countries. Frequent changes in government and civil unrest disrupt governance structures, often resulting in the replacement of key postal officials based on political affiliations, which hampers continuity and weakens institutional memory.

Such instability leads to inconsistent policy implementation, delays in project implementation and a lack of sustained support for reforms. Strategic plans are often reversed or abandoned with changes in leadership, undermining long-term development.

It also discourages investment and donor support, as uncertain environments pose risks to infrastructure and service delivery. In conflict-affected areas, operations are further disrupted as a result of damaged facilities, unsafe logistics routes and declining public trust. The destruction of infrastructure, including postal offices and transportation networks, significantly hampers service delivery and limits the ability to modernize and maintain essential postal services.

## EXCLUSION FROM NATIONAL PRIORITIES

Despite recent developments aimed at prioritizing the postal sector within national plans, it remains sidelined in some countries, leading to a lack of recognition of the sector's potential contribution to inclusive development. While there have been some efforts to integrate postal services into broader national strategies, the sector is still often excluded from key national planning processes, limiting its ability to play a transformative role in economic and social development.

This exclusion is further compounded by the insufficient efforts of DOs to advocate for the sector's importance. Without clear, strategic communication and awareness campaigns, the vital role of the postal service in enhancing connectivity, supporting e-commerce and promoting financial inclusion remains largely unrecognized by policymakers and the general public. As a result, the sector struggles to secure the necessary investments, preventing it from realizing its full potential in driving national socio-economic progress.

## POWER RELIABILITY CHALLENGES

Power reliability is a major challenge for DOs in sub-Saharan Africa, with frequent power outages, load shedding and inadequate infrastructure disrupting operations. These power disruptions directly impact mail processing, sorting and tracking, leading to delays and unreliable service delivery and thus making it difficult to meet EDI and other quality of service requirements.

The reliance on back-up generators adds to operational costs that DOs struggle to absorb, while rural areas, often without consistent electricity, face even greater difficulties in providing basic postal services or adopting modern digital solutions. This instability undermines the ability of postal organizations to modernize and integrate into the digital economy, affecting customer satisfaction and confidence. To address these challenges, there is a need for investments in power infrastructure, including renewable energy sources, and for DOs to explore alternative energy solutions, such as solar power, to ensure continuity and efficiency in service delivery.

## Competitive pressures and market dynamics

### CHANGING MARKET

The current market is characterized by strong demand and a rapid evolution of consumer expectations, together with rising expectations regarding quality of service, which most post offices are struggling to meet. Posts have often struggled to maintain postal services that are relevant to an increasingly digital world and to expand service offerings in line with the evolving needs of different population groups. This inability to provide dependable services not only frustrates customers but also jeopardizes the critical role of Posts in serving communities across their respective countries.

### CUT-THROAT COMPETITION

Most DOs in Africa are burdened by legacy systems and have therefore faced challenges in modernizing or in collaborating effectively, leaving them ill-equipped to compete in an increasingly competitive and digitalized market. The continued reliance on legacy networks that were primarily designed for letter delivery, even when consumer demand has increasingly shifted towards parcels and merchandise ordered online, has negatively affected the bottom line of most post offices.

The inability to catch up with private sector counterparts in terms of technology adoption has reduced the value proposition of the post office in the market. Today, the general perception is that the post office and its offerings are unreliable and less advantageous than those in the private sector, resulting in fewer customers to provide services to and less revenue.

Moreover, in all segments of the postal market, the strong competition (formal and informal) from providers not subject to the constraints and rates of the USO also continues to pose a significant threat to DO revenues.

### CHALLENGES OF OPEN AND DIGITAL INNOVATION<sup>12</sup>

The slow uptake of and adaptation to new technologies has become a major challenge in keeping up with the demands of the global economy and the expectations of citizens. The failure to implement and integrate advanced digital solutions has hindered the modernization of postal systems, limiting the ability to expand services beyond national borders and fully compete in the digital age.

Several factors contribute to this issue, including limited investment in modern technologies such as digital platforms, blockchain, artificial intelligence and automation. Without these innovations, DOs struggle to streamline operations, improve efficiency and meet customer expectations for faster, more reliable services. Additionally, a significant number of postal staff lack adequate digital and e-commerce skills.

Moreover, inadequate IT infrastructure remains a significant barrier. Many DOs still lack essential tools like servers, reliable connectivity, and digital addressing systems, especially in rural areas. This technological gap not only affects service delivery but also makes postal networks increasingly vulnerable to cybersecurity threats owing to outdated systems and insufficient protection measures.

## FREE SHIPPING DECEPTION

E-commerce platforms offering “free shipping” create unfair competition by misleading consumers and undermining the revenues of DOs. This deceptive marketing practice presents a significant challenge, calling for action from the UPU, restricted unions, postal regulators and other industry stakeholders to address its impact. The widespread promotion of so-called free shipping undermines traditional DOs and logistics providers, distorting market dynamics. Therefore, it is essential for consumer protection authorities to educate customers about the true costs behind free shipping and its broader effects on the industry, while encouraging greater transparency in how shipping charges are presented and allocated.

## SOCIO-ECONOMIC CHALLENGES

High levels of poverty, limited access to capital, and fragile economic environments have constrained the ability of many post offices to implement necessary reforms and improvements and have often thwarted e-commerce growth.

## Financial resources

### INSUFFICIENT PUBLIC INVESTMENT

Low levels of government investment in the postal sector, particularly in infrastructure, have left many countries with outdated and inadequate facilities that struggle to meet the growing demands of modern postal operations. The lack of sustained public funding for upgrading and maintaining essential infrastructure, such as sorting centres, delivery networks and technological systems, hinders the sector’s ability to improve service quality and efficiency. Additionally, key areas like human resources, research and development, and modernization projects remain largely unaddressed, further stalling progress.

Without significant investment, postal systems are unable to modernize operations, integrate new technologies or expand services to meet evolving consumer expectations. This infrastructure gap not only limits the sector’s capacity to support e-commerce and digital innovations but also results in delayed and unreliable service delivery, particularly in rural and underserved areas. The absence of public investment in workforce development and capacity-building programmes leaves postal staff undertrained in the latest technologies, exacerbating the sector’s challenges and preventing it from adapting to the digital age.

### LIMITED RESOURCES TO INVEST IN MODERN INFRASTRUCTURE, EXPANDED COVERAGE, HUMAN RESOURCES CAPACITY BUILDING, AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY<sup>13</sup>

Infrastructure financing needs across all sectors in Africa are estimated at \$108 billion USD per year, according to the African Development Bank. For the postal sector, these needs vary depending on a country’s economic situation, surface area, population and strategic priorities. However, the sector’s key financing needs can be summarized as described below.

Many African countries require significant investment to modernize their postal infrastructure in order to remain competitive and meet the growing, diverse demands of their citizens. This includes upgrading post offices, expanding distribution networks, and adopting modern technologies to enhance operational efficiency and service delivery. Additionally, in many rural and remote areas, postal service coverage is limited.

Extending postal services to these underserved regions is crucial for improving accessibility and fostering inclusion, ensuring that even rural communities can benefit from reliable postal services.

The postal sector also needs a skilled workforce to deliver efficient services. To remain competitive, it must undergo a qualitative transformation, shifting from a labour-intensive to a knowledge-intensive sector. This requires substantial investment in staff training and capacity building to improve service quality and operational efficiency.

Lastly, the uptake of digital technologies is vital for the sector's competitiveness in the changing postal landscape. Investments in online tracking systems, e-commerce platforms and data management solutions are essential to ensure that the postal sector remains relevant, efficient and reliable in meeting customer needs.

## UNPRODUCTIVE PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS

This issue has posed a significant challenge in the postal sector. While the potential benefits of collaboration are clear, effective private sector partnerships are often lacking, and those that do exist tend to be unprofitable. The few business contracts in place often fail as a result of misaligned goals, poor contract management and ineffective implementation. Many partnerships result in private companies failing to meet expectations, while public entities struggle to regulate or monitor these arrangements. The root causes of these failures include unclear objectives, insufficient private sector investment and inadequate risk-sharing mechanisms. As a result, these unproductive partnerships waste resources, erode public trust, and miss opportunities for sustainable development and service improvements.

## UPU MANDATORY CONTRIBUTIONS AND AFFORDABILITY OF PRODUCTS AND SERVICES

Currently, 15 countries in the Africa programme are under UPU sanctions owing to arrears in mandatory contributions, which restricts their membership rights and access to essential UPU services. This issue arises from several factors, including the financial instability of both member countries and DOs, as well as claims from DOs that UPU products and services, particularly postal technology, are too costly for many countries to afford. This financial challenge significantly hampers postal development in these countries, limiting their ability to modernize services and integrate into the global postal network.

## KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

**Carry forward to the next cycle (2026–2029) all outstanding project activities** under the ORE regional project that were not completed during the Abidjan cycle, including milestones that remain unachieved. As part of this effort, a digital dashboard should be established to track and reference key performance indicators.

**Collaborate with and leverage PAPU and other restricted unions in Africa** to further support the regional think-tank team tasked with devising and proposing actionable strategies and policies to enhance regional transport networks. This includes creating regional transport hubs and engaging with major regional airlines and international transport stakeholders.

**Enhance training and capacity-building programmes for postal staff** to improve digital competencies, technical skills and familiarity with operating manuals. This initiative should leverage the Trainpost platform, regional capacity-building centres and the pool of regional experts, in line with the regionalization strategy.

**Strengthen regulatory frameworks and operational interoperability,** particularly in addressing challenges such as free shipping, customs procedures and data sharing. The Africa region's postal sector regulatory framework should be used as a key tool for harmonizing regulatory practices.

**Promote targeted and coordinated efforts** that involve substantial financial investment, international support and capacity building aimed at strengthening institutional, physical and digital postal infrastructure. This should include exploring alternative financing models, enhancing cooperation, and using the UPU white paper *Financing the postal sector in Africa*.

**Foster collaboration and coordination to address common challenges**, identify opportunities for growth, and facilitate the formation of productive partnerships across the region.

**Implement targeted interventions** that address systemic issues such as resource limitations and infrastructure deficits, while promoting accelerated technological adoption. These measures will help bridge the performance gap and unlock growth potential in the postal sector.

**Encourage designated operators to actively pursue infrastructure modernization**, digital transformation and innovation in order to modernize and enhance service delivery.

**Prioritize interventions in countries facing the most critical development challenges**, ensuring equitable growth in postal services across all nations, regardless of their initial capacity.

**Redefine the scope of postal services** to align with evolving market dynamics, particularly in the context of e-commerce, logistics and other emerging trends.

**Acknowledge and address broader socio-economic and political conditions within individual countries**, as sustainable postal development is closely tied to national development goals.

**Develop tailored technical cooperation interventions that consider each country's unique needs and circumstances**, ensuring that no country or community is left behind in the digital age. These interventions should include the implementation of alternative energy solutions such as solar power to support continuity and efficiency in service delivery.

**Strengthen the UPU's presence in the field** by further empowering subregional field offices, enhancing localized support and coordination.

**Emphasize the importance of countries fulfilling their mandatory UPU contribution obligations**, and explore viable strategies to lift sanctions on defaulting members in order to reintegrate them into the global postal community.

**Establish robust business continuity plans** and implement comprehensive disaster risk management programmes to ensure resilience and operational stability.

**Reassess costs associated with accessing UPU products and services** – in particular postal technology – to ensure affordability for least developed countries and designated operators experiencing financial difficulties yet needing technology-based solutions.

## PANDEMIC RESPONSE

The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated existing trends in the postal sector, shifting demand from letter mail to parcels and logistics services as online purchases soared. In response, the UPU IB conducted an in-depth analysis and developed a post-pandemic recovery guide to help member countries mitigate the effects of future crises and restore services more efficiently.

DOs adapted more swiftly to supply chain disruptions than many other sectors, implementing flexible, innovative solutions. Despite restrictions on movement and closed borders, many Posts remained operational, ensuring the continued collection and delivery of mail.

Globally, as indeed in Africa, postal services have gained recognition as being essential, with postal workers seen as frontline responders, delivering vital items, including medicines and medical equipment, to vulnerable and isolated populations.

Therefore, it is crucial that Posts continue to be accorded their essential-services status at the national level in a post-pandemic context, supported by appropriate government measures.

Below are the highlights of the African postal sector's pandemic response.

### BUSINESS CONTINUITY

The UPU, through the DRF, supported the development of business continuity plans, staff training, and the procurement of disaster management equipment, with the Africa region benefiting from 13 projects. *The Pandemic Recovery Guide for Postal Services* has become an essential tool. Additionally, the ESF provided a complementary channel to support post-disaster recovery, including recovery from pandemic-related disruptions and supply chain breakdowns. During the 2022–2025 cycle, DOs in Africa maintained essential services by implementing flexible supply chains and emergency protocols developed under the DRF and ESF frameworks.

### SOCIAL SERVICES

Under the Post4Health Facility, African DOs, such as BotswanaPost, transformed postal networks into vital healthcare logistics hubs. With UPU support, BotswanaPost integrated cold-chain technologies in order to distribute medicines and vaccines to underserved communities, highlighting the Post's role as essential social infrastructure during health crises. The Postal Corporation of Kenya also benefited from this initiative, strengthening the sector's contribution to public health. Other DOs, including those in Mauritius, Namibia, Tanzania and Zimbabwe, have also played a key role in healthcare logistics, continuing their efforts beyond the pandemic.

## CAPACITY BUILDING

The Trainpost platform, offering multilingual courses, has significantly supported capacity building across the region. Its mobile app enabled offline learning, helping to address workforce training gaps, particularly in rural areas. Many DOs in Africa have leveraged digital tools for capacity building, remote work and improved service delivery.

## FINANCIAL RESILIENCE

As part of the pandemic response, DOs in Africa implemented financial resilience initiatives to offset declining mail revenues and boost sustainability. BotswanaPost's PosoMoney mobile wallet expanded to over 1,500 agents, generating 15% of non-postal revenue. Kenya's PostaPay integrated with M-Pesa and launched a unified mobile payment app to complement other digital transaction platforms. Rwanda's Iposita leveraged the Irembo platform for government e-payments. Ghana Post enhanced GhPostPay to support online transactions and digital payments. NamPost offers Internet banking and a mobile app, along with financial services that support Visa card transactions.

Through FITAF, DOs in Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Rwanda, Tanzania, Togo, and others have modernized financial services by introducing digital payments and savings products, expanding access to underserved populations, including rural communities, women and youth.

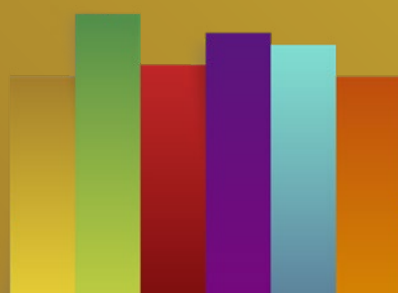
To strengthen financial resilience, diversification through fintech and e-commerce, public-private partnerships, and regional digital transformation are essential, especially for enabling cross-border mobile money interoperability.

## DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION, E-COMMERCE, AND LAST-MILE DELIVERY SOLUTIONS

Lessons learned from pandemic-induced restrictions on movement and border closures highlighted the need for robust digital and delivery systems. This period saw a surge in online shopping and increased demand for last-mile delivery solutions across Africa.

DOs responded by rolling out e-commerce market places such as Côte d'Ivoire's Sanlishop, Rwanda's RwandaMart, Zimpost's Zimbabwemall.post, Ghana Post's PostShop, Ethiopost's Post Shop, and Tanzania Post's Kipepeo.post, completed by last-mile delivery. Most African DOs have made significant progress in fulfilling essential e-commerce prerequisites, including digital readiness, physical infrastructure, integrated payment systems, data exchange capabilities, interconnection with broader supply chains, and customer relationship management.

CHAPTER 4  
**DEVELOPMENT  
COOPERATION  
FRAMEWORK FOR  
2026–2029**



# DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION POLICY

Taking into consideration the lessons learned from the implementation of the 2022–2025 cycle, the outlook for cooperation, the discussions held during CA meetings and an analysis of key development indicators, the UPU development cooperation policy for 2026–2029 will remain aligned with the key issues to be addressed by the Dubai World Postal Strategy, which are summarized as follows:

**Ensuring financial viability** by regaining postal volumes and capitalizing on the exponential growth of e-commerce;

**Positioning Posts to play a more significant role** in fostering national socio-economic growth by leveraging their infrastructure to provide services beyond traditional mail, including supporting e-commerce, financial services, government agency services and other key enablers of development;

**Positioning the postal sector to contribute to global development goals**, including climate change and gender equality, and supporting the growth of MSMEs;

**Ensuring the seamless integration of postal ecosystem partners**, such as e-commerce platforms and fintech companies, to meet modern consumer demands and provide comprehensive services.

The policy will also be structured around three main development areas:

## AREA 1 REGIONALIZATION PROCESS (UPU PRESENCE IN THE FIELD, RDPS AND COOPERATION WITH RESTRICTED UNIONS), WITH HIGHER PRIORITY GIVEN TO LDCS, LLDCS AND SIDS

The UPU will be positioned with greater proximity to member countries around the globe, with increased visibility and regional representation. RDPs will translate the UPU's global strategy into regional priorities, as agreed with regional stakeholders, and shape the global vision of the regional postal sector. Against that backdrop, the main activities carried out in area 1 will be based on the following objectives:

Strengthen the role of the regional offices by enhancing expertise, particularly in key areas such as project management, and by ensuring efficient and responsive communication between UPU regional offices and the IB;

Increase flexibility and autonomy in the field presence model so that it can be quickly adapted to changing conditions and emerging needs. This includes cooperating with all restricted union teams capable of rapidly responding to events and opportunities;

Regionalize UPU-led actions in the field in order to strengthen the Union's regional and global activities and ensure a greater local impact;

Engage UPU regional offices in the formulation and implementation of RDPs in cooperation with member countries, the restricted unions and other partners;

Strengthen partnerships with governments, restricted unions, international and regional organizations, and private sector stakeholders to ensure that projects align with regional and national priorities and have the greatest possible impact;

Further strengthen the role of the restricted unions in identifying, promoting, implementing and managing regional projects, while further enhancing their role and their capacity to carry out the Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning function for such projects, to maximize implementation efficiency, effectiveness and impact;

Reinforce resource mobilization through the UPU regional offices and take advantage of the UPU's greater proximity to member countries, regional development banks and other regional development partners to help strengthen the postal network;

Identify and work with regional experts in various areas of postal development to ensure the relevance of interventions with postal institutions around the world;

Continue to give higher priority to the approach adopted for cooperation activities for LDCs, SIDS and LLDCs, with a more comprehensive framework that takes into account programmes developed by other regional organizations in favour of countries whose governments are prepared to play a greater role in postal sector modernization.

## AREA 2 DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION PROJECTS WITH EMPHASIS ON SOUTH–SOUTH AND TRIANGULAR COOPERATION

The UPU will ensure the effective implementation of technical cooperation projects to help member countries guarantee universal postal services and reduce development gaps in postal operations. This will be achieved by updating policies and regulations, procuring relevant delivery equipment, training staff, raising awareness, facilitating technical cooperation and partnerships, and providing advisory services.

The cross-cutting nature of the UPU's development cooperation projects in the field calls for greater coordination to ensure consistency between the different areas of intervention and to avoid duplication between projects and inefficient dispersion of resources.

Applying the project management approach to actions implemented by the IB in the various regions will ensure that these actions are deployed in a more coherent manner, with oversight of all management processes, from project initiation to completion, evaluation and reporting.

Area 2 will also focus on strengthening the alignment of capacity-building interventions with the targeted needs of member countries, through needs assessments and linkages with regional priorities and the overall strategic direction set by the UN SDGs.

Identifying and leveraging linkages between development cooperation projects and the regional development agenda is central to the success of the South–South and triangular cooperation approach. It is thus acknowledged that while African regional integration strategies are multifaceted, involving a range of initiatives aimed at creating a more integrated and prosperous continent, the postal sector has a crucial role to play in their implementation.

These strategies involve phasing out trade barriers, harmonizing policies, and promoting the free movement of people and goods, with an overarching goal of creating a large, integrated African market underpinned by tangible economic growth evidenced in part by perceivable improvements in the continent's global competitiveness.

Accordingly, the focus of development cooperation initiatives under this area will intentionally include the harmonization of policy and regulatory frameworks, infrastructure development, trade facilitation, and postal sector support towards national and regional industrialization and value addition.

Furthermore, development cooperation projects will deliver capacity-building solutions to meet these needs, focusing on country-specific outputs and outcomes. Greater use will be made of cost-effective training modalities, such as e-learning, remote intervention and train-the-trainer approaches.

Integrating resource mobilization into the initial stages of project development ensures that projects are designed with funding opportunities in mind. This means identifying potential funding sources and aligning project objectives with the interests of donors.

Under area 2, enhancing South–South and triangular cooperation will be a key priority, focusing on experience sharing, appropriate technology aligned with national priorities, and exploring new funding mechanisms for capacity building, training, management and technological support.

### AREA 3

## DISASTER RISK MANAGEMENT AND EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE

The main focus of area 3 will be to align all field activities with the SDGs to promote sustainable development, focusing on projects that support DRM, climate resilience and social inclusion.

The IB will continue to implement activities geared towards developing and applying DRM skills in postal service strategies that prepare member countries to respond effectively to natural disasters. These will include awareness raising, prevention, mitigation and preparatory activities, such as risk assessments, emergency response plans and training for postal staff.

Furthermore, the central focus of the development cooperation approach in this area, from the regulatory perspective, will be the development and implementation of a regional model DRM framework for the postal sector, which will seek to address the following:

A harmonized regional definition of the concept and practice of DRM as it relates to the postal sector and how, from the management and operational perspectives, it should combine mitigation and preparedness with response and recovery;

Recommended procedures for responding quickly to, and recovering expeditiously from, disruptions and emergencies affecting national and regional postal sector infrastructure, expressed as a framework of regulatory requirements;

Recommended operational measures for incorporating the concept and practice of disaster risk reduction, focusing primarily on pre-disaster mitigation and preparedness in the postal network, as a component of the DRM regulatory framework;

Identification and encouraged adoption of international best practices in DRM in the postal sector;

A harmonized regional approach to incorporating the entire risk management lifecycle (risk prevention, mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery) in the regulatory requirements applicable to licensed DOs in Africa.

## REGIONAL OBJECTIVES AND ALIGNMENT OF PRIORITIES

The broad priority areas identified during the Africa Round Table held in June 2024 in Arusha, Tanzania, that are the bedrock of the Africa Strategy (2026–2030) centred on the digitalization of postal services, the growth of e-commerce and a focus on customers.

**Enhance services to capture the e-commerce market:** ensure universal, affordable and high-quality postal packet and parcel delivery to support B2C bulk shipment operations, with a focus on speed and predictability to enhance the customer experience;

**Improve the fintech business model:**

develop a financially sustainable postal service that connects all citizens and businesses, ensuring equal access to financial services;

**Enhance the postal customer experience:**

improve delivery speed, reliability and communication; implement real-time tracking and convenient tools; and streamline returns and customer support;

**Digitalize postal services:** expand the digitalization of postal services to include postal registered electronic mail and other digital solutions, enabling cross-border transactions and upgrading to align with the latest technologies;

**Develop a holistic, tailored postal sector reform agenda for Africa:** ensure UPU support for postal sector reform through a whole-of-government approach and tailored regulatory frameworks to decrease regulatory burdens and improve internal coordination;

**Review, and potentially revise, the UPU's mandate:** consider a mandate beyond communications, to include trade, e-commerce and citizen-centric service delivery;

**Review current postal definitions:**

conduct a review with the aim of accommodating the various (new) actors involved in postal services;

**Strive for pan-African harmonization of key regulations:**

focus on Customs, security and transport across countries for seamless postal supply chain integration;

**Promote the value of postal services:**

promote postal services, in particular to governments and citizens, with a focus on youth as future users, and have the UPU advocate for increased government investment in and commitment to postal reforms.

The following objectives have been identified for Africa in order to address structural challenges, leverage opportunities and ensure sustainable postal sector growth:

## Postal networks, infrastructure modernization and resilience

To remain competitive in the digital economy and meet the growing demand for e-commerce, postal networks in Africa must modernize their infrastructure and enhance resilience. This includes both physical and human capital investments to support quality service delivery.

### OBJECTIVES:

Upgrade postal infrastructure and delivery networks to support e-commerce and last-mile logistics, particularly in rural and underserved areas;

Enhance operational reliability, security and customer trust through modern tracking systems, secure handling, and compliance with quality standards;

Strengthen regional cross-border e-commerce and logistics integration by harmonizing customs processes, developing transport corridors/hubs and participating in digital marketplaces;

Build disaster resilience and establish business continuity plans to mitigate climate risks and geopolitical disruptions;

Invest in human capital and institutional capacity through training in digital skills, logistics and leadership.

Alignment with UPU goals: This priority area contributes to goals 1 and 2 of the Dubai Business Plan by modernizing infrastructure and supply chains. DWP 27 (Development and cooperation – regionalization and projects) and DWP 205 (Development and cooperation-regionalization) support these initiatives.

## DRIVING DIGITALIZATION, FINANCIAL INCLUSION AND SERVICE DIVERSIFICATION

Digitalization offers DOs in Africa a pathway to broaden services, improve accessibility and enhance their role in national digital economies. Embracing digital and financial innovations will position Posts as inclusive service hubs across urban and rural landscapes.

### OBJECTIVES:

Expand digital infrastructure (e.g. EAD, addressing systems) to enable Posts to offer digital services;

Accelerate digital inclusion by leveraging postal networks for e-government services, e-commerce and community access;

Scale digital financial services (e.g. mobile wallets, remittances) to advance financial inclusion, especially for rural populations and MSMEs;

Pursue national, regional and international interoperability between postal financial services and other financial solutions leveraging ubiquitous technologies such as mobile telephony.

Alignment with UPU goals: This priority area is tied to goals 2 and 3 of the Dubai Business Plan, integrating Posts into national digital economies. DWP 27 (Development and cooperation – regionalization and projects) supports these initiatives.

## Regulatory and policy reform and market adaptation

Dynamic and enabling regulatory environments are vital to unlocking the full potential of postal services in the digital era. This priority focuses on modernizing outdated legal frameworks, promoting competitive and inclusive markets, and ensuring sustainable universal service provision through comprehensive postal policy and regulatory reforms.

### OBJECTIVES:

Strengthen ongoing efforts to modernize postal regulatory frameworks in line with e-commerce growth, digital payment systems, and sustainable financing of the universal service obligation;

Adapt regulations for the digital economy, including in relation to cybersecurity and cross-border data flows;

Promote comprehensive postal policy reforms that address competition, licensing, pricing, interoperability and institutional governance in order to ensure a level playing field and sustainable sector growth;

Redefine the scope of the postal sector to align with evolving market dynamics, particularly in the context of e-commerce, logistics and other emerging trends;

Promote the practice of evidence-based regulation and regulatory performance assessment, along with other emerging regulatory best practices in the postal sector.

Alignment with UPU goals: This priority area addresses goal 1 of the Dubai Business Plan, ensuring agile, market-responsive policies and promoting policy coherence across member countries. DWP 27 (Development and cooperation – regionalization and projects) and DWP 205 (Development and cooperation – regionalization) supports these initiatives.

## Regionalization and resource mobilization

Regional collaboration and decentralized support are essential to ensuring sustainable growth and reducing disparities among African countries. This priority strengthens the UPU's regional footprint while mobilizing new resources for national and regional projects.

### OBJECTIVES:

Strengthen UPU field presence through regional offices and localized technical assistance;

Develop innovative financing models (e.g. public–private partnerships, voluntary contributions) to fund infrastructure and digital projects;

Enhance South–South cooperation to share best practices and resources among African nations;

Identify funding opportunities linked to donor-funded regional development programmes that can be implemented through regional postal networks;

Tap into the existing resource base for regional integration strategies and initiatives such as the African Continental Free Trade Area.

Alignment with UPU goals: This priority area is central to goal 3 of the Dubai Business Plan, which embraces regionalization and the UPU's focus on inclusive development. Proposals such as DWP 27 (Development and cooperation – regionalization and projects) and DWP 205 (Development and cooperation – regionalization) support this approach.

## COOPERATION MODALITIES AND FUNDING STRATEGY

### Cooperation modalities

The UPU development cooperation policy is implemented through strategic modalities centred on a regional approach, with the RDP for Africa serving as the key framework for field activities in the region. This approach focuses on enhancing regional cooperation and includes the following:

#### REGIONALIZATION AS A KEY PILLAR

Enhancing regionalization remains central to the UPU's development cooperation efforts. The 2026–2029 RDP aims to strengthen regional offices, enhance their expertise, and align global strategies with regional and national priorities. Key actions include improving field responsiveness, fostering regional partnerships through restricted unions and other sector players, mobilizing local resources, and deploying regional experts to ensure relevant and effective interventions. Special attention will be paid to supporting LDCs, SIDS and LLDCs through targeted cooperation frameworks. The UPU's regional presence should be a key driver of inclusive and sustainable postal development.

#### SOUTH–SOUTH AND TRIANGULAR COOPERATION

As part of its commitment to reducing development gaps in postal operations and ensuring universal postal service, the UPU will prioritize the strengthening of South–South and triangular cooperation as a key method of development cooperation. This approach will support the effective implementation of technical cooperation projects by facilitating the exchange of knowledge, skills and appropriate technologies among developing countries, while also engaging development partners and donors in collaborative efforts.

Through this method of cooperation, member countries will benefit from shared experiences and practical solutions that are contextually relevant and aligned with national priorities. It will promote capacity building, training, technology transfer and institutional strengthening by leveraging the innovations and expertise of countries that have faced similar development challenges.

Projects under this approach will be guided by needs assessments, aligned with the SDGs, and implemented using efficient project management practices.

## INTEGRATED PROJECT MANAGEMENT APPROACH

To ensure coherence, efficiency and results-driven outcomes, the UPU will adopt a structured project management approach across its development cooperation initiatives. This approach will ensure that all actions are tailored to country-specific needs, based on thorough needs assessments, and are aligned with RDPs and the UN SDGs.

Enhanced coordination across sectors and regions will be prioritized to minimize duplication, ensure strategic consistency, and maximize the efficient use of resources. Sustainability will be reinforced through the integration of resource mobilization strategies at the earliest stages of project design, ensuring alignment with priorities and long-term funding opportunities.

The UPU will also promote cost-effective training methods, including e-learning, remote interventions and train-the-trainer models, to scale capacity-building efforts and expand reach.

## MULTI-STAKEHOLDER PARTNERSHIPS

The UPU will focus on multi-stakeholder partnerships to address systemic challenges in the postal sector. Partnerships with restricted unions will be strengthened to enhance regional cooperation and service delivery. Public–private partnerships will be formed with fintech companies to expand mobile money services and with logistics firms for last-mile delivery. The UPU will strengthen collaboration within the UN system, aligning efforts with the International Telecommunication Union and the African Telecommunications Union on digital infrastructure. At the same time, private sector engagement will be strengthened by working with leading

e-commerce platforms to integrate postal networks into supply chains and address market distortions caused by “free shipping” practices. These partnerships will serve as an enabling lever for innovation, scale and sustainability in transforming the postal ecosystem.

## FUNDING STRATEGY

During the Abidjan cycle, the UPU’s development cooperation budget was the primary funding source for interventions in Africa, as outlined in the development cooperation policy and the Abidjan Business Plan. Voluntary contributions (under tied funds) also supported these activities. However, member countries have faced challenges in meeting their financial obligations, which needs to be addressed, particularly by lifting sanctions and applying initiatives to strengthen the cooperation budget.

The implementation of the RDP for Africa for the 2026–2029 cycle will require a robust, diversified and strategic approach to funding and resource mobilization. Drawing from lessons learned in previous cycles and insights from the UPU’s study on financing the postal sector in Africa, the following funding mechanisms and strategies are proposed:

### Leveraging UPU development cooperation instruments

**UPU technical assistance budgets:** utilize regular UPU budgetary allocations to support core RDP activities and regional projects;

**Quality of Service Fund:** target allocations to improve mail quality, operational efficiency and capacity-building, especially in LDCs;

**Common Fund projects:** mobilize and coordinate multi-donor contributions under joint projects that align with the objectives of the RDP.

### Strengthening voluntary contributions from development partners

**Engage possible contributors and development partners to co-finance regional flagship initiatives,** primarily through the tied funds approach;

**Forge partnerships with international financial institutions and bilateral agencies for larger-scale infrastructure and digital transformation projects.**

## Mobilizing domestic resources

Encourage governments to integrate postal sector development into national digital economy and financial inclusion strategies, allocating budgetary resources accordingly;

Promote the designation of postal operators as essential service providers to attract public funding, especially for rural access, e-government, and last-mile delivery initiatives.

## Public–private partnerships

Foster public–private partnerships to co-develop digital platforms, e-commerce logistics networks and renewable energy solutions for postal infrastructure;

Encourage private sector investment through incentives, co-branding and revenue-sharing models aligned with RDP priorities.

## Cost recovery and revenue

**diversification:** support DOs in adopting sustainable pricing models and developing new revenue streams (e.g. digital financial services, logistics agency banking).



**AFRICA**

**ARAB REGION**

**ASIA-PACIFIC**

**CARIBBEAN**

**EUROPE AND CIS**

**LATIN AMERICA**



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