

Moving the postal sector forward since 1875

SEPTEMBER 2011

N° 3

UNION POSTALE



Universal Postal Union,
a specialized agency
of the United Nations

.....
ID-ing the world

Postal workers can
drive innovation



Quality of Service Fund
10 years of
linking the
quality chain



Poststempel

Validieren und Entwerten im Postamt

Mail Daters

For Validation or Cancelling in the Post Office

Dateurs postaux

Pour valider et oblitérer au bureau de poste

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Contents



Cover: Die Gestalter

Cover story

Quality of Service Fund clocks up 10 years

Almost 100 million USD and 60 projects later, QSF goes from strength to strength

7

Features

Posts ID the world

Several Posts offer customers identification services with good reason

12

Barbados and China win first prize

Winners of the International Letter-writing Competition 2011 and their letters

22

Southern Africa charts postal future

A historic consensus paves the way

27

The interview

Quality jobs, skills and services

Uni Global Union's director says postal workers can drive innovation

16

Departments

In brief

4

Editor's note

5

Who's who at the UPU

6

Market focus

27

September 2011

Union Postale is the Universal Postal Union's flagship magazine, founded in 1875. It is published quarterly in seven languages and takes a closer look at UPU activities and features international news and developments within the postal sector. The magazine regularly publishes well researched articles on topical issues facing the industry, as well as interviews with the sector's leading individuals. The colour publication is distributed to Posts around the world from our 191 member countries, including thousands of decision-makers, who regard it as an important source of information, as well as postal stakeholders.

Union Postale is also published in French, Arabic, Chinese, German, Russian and Spanish.

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in brief

Postal security

Inter-committee work moves forward



Napolitano recently voiced support for UPU-led work (Photo: DHS)

The new UPU inter-committee security group (ICSG) says work is progressing well in gathering data to create a new security model for the safe transportation of mail by air.

The group, which recently met for a second time at UPU headquarters in Berne, aims to harmonize global postal security standards to ensure that international mail can move smoothly in a world where air security is constantly heightened.

Set up in April, the group gathers postal representatives from all over the world, as well as aviation, customs, standards, trade and security organizations, including the United States' Transportation Security Agency (TSA).

Chairman Ebbe Andersen from Post Denmark says the group's work plan is on schedule. "Our challenge is to better understand how international mail operations work in different countries," said Andersen. "How is international mail inducted in the network? How is it transported? What security measures are applied? We are looking for the gaps to find a common solution, as any new security measures will have an impact on all postal operators."

The group will present a draft framework to the UPU Council of

Administration and Postal Operations Council before seeking formal adoption at the UPU Congress in 2012.

Once a model is developed, the group wants to test it through a pilot project, Andersen explained. "A pilot with the airlines will be key to see if it works."

Harmonization critical

The UPU believes a postal security model dealing with the specificities of international mail sent on commercial and cargo airlines is needed. This would avoid security measures being developed and imposed by individual countries or administrations, which wreak havoc on international mail transportation.

New security rules introduced last year by the TSA led many Posts to stop or delay sending US-bound mail for several months. The UPU wants to avoid similar situations in future, knowing that other countries and the European Union are working on their own air transportation security measures.

State support

Janet Napolitano, head of the US Department of Homeland Security (DHS), praised the UPU's efforts in

creating international standards in security. Speaking at a June meeting of the World Customs Organization (WCO), Napolitano recognized recent joint efforts by the UPU, WCO and International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) to strengthen the global mail supply chain.

"We should all support the work underway within the UPU... to develop a global standard for advance data on mail shipments for security purposes, as well as standard processes for handling and resolving anomalies detected at international transit hubs. The goal of these efforts will be to update the UPU Convention and underlying Regulations, an effort we all hope can be accomplished next year," Napolitano said.

The DHS is working with the UPU's ICSG. As well as UPU member countries, members include the WCO, ICAO and the World Trade Organization.

"This group has made impressive progress over the last several months in establishing emergency security contacts in all 191 UPU member states to respond to mail transit alarms. I encourage those countries... not yet participating to support this effort," Napolitano said.

She also emphasized the importance of not impeding international trade. "The global supply chain system must be able to continue to function, and quickly recover from major disruptions, because the efficient functioning of the global logistics system is essential to the global economy." **RL & FM**

Editor's note

In the communication and journalism business, the proverb, "empty vessels sound the loudest", rings true. When forging communication strategies, deciding what and how to communicate with our diverse stakeholders, listening carefully to the many voices is a requisite for the job. It enables the wheat to be carefully separated from the chaff, a crucial task when the credibility of an organization or company is at stake.

So, one of the pleasures of my current job is discovering the unsung heroes of the postal sector. Communicating about their achievements and telling their stories make the postal business come alive and show that our industry is a relevant one with a human touch.

These heroes come from all walks of life but, as professionals, they share a high degree of competence and expertise, devoting their energies to worthwhile projects and letting the results speak for themselves.

The unsung heroes featured in the last issue were from Japan Post. This time, the spotlight is on the Quality of Service Fund (QSF), celebrating its 10th anniversary this year.

The QSF's work reflect values at the UPU's core: partnering with designated operators to effect real and lasting changes to quality of service levels on the ground. To borrow the words of Rhéal LeBlanc, the UPU's Communication Programme manager, and cover-story author: "The simplest ideas are sometimes the best. And the idea of setting up a fund to improve universal service quality has proven to be a case in point."

This is a success story built on the many labours of its secretariat, the QSF coordinators out in the field, the board trustees, Posts and member countries. The figures mentioned in the cover story leave us in no doubt about the magnitude and importance of this collaborative work.

Other magazine highlights include a look at identification services offered by Posts and an interview with the head of Uni Global Union on letting postal workers enter the debate on business innovation.

Faryal Mirza, Editor-in-chief, *Union Postale* magazine

World postal strategy

Regional roundtables update

The financing of the universal service, human resources and financial services have dominated the regional roundtables held to date. The discussions, held in seven locations across the globe, were designed to enable regional players to voice their concerns and requirements for the future global postal roadmap.

Six rounds of regional discussions allowed 400 participants from more than 170 member countries to discuss the proposed objectives of the next world postal strategy.

In Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, the universal service, its implementation and funding in Africa, was discussed. Cameroon raised the point that the adaptation of the universal service to market conditions could be part of the new strategy. Nigeria also said that capacity-building and training

activities were required to ensure strategy implementation at the regional level.

In St Petersburg, Russia, talks focused on developing financial services. This covered increasing investment in information and communication technologies and improving access to postal financial services.

Financing the service

At the discussions in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, China said it considered sector reform and development as priorities for the next world postal strategy. Indonesia mentioned the importance of new technologies to drive sector reform. The financing of the universal service was also mentioned, with countries calling on the UPU to play a more pro-active role.

Speaking in Doha, Qatar, in September, UPU Director General Edouard Dayan said there were a number of important areas to consider. These included: a clear strategy for the UPU, work programmes and projects, which were not only concrete but also implementable, and human resources and financing. **FM**

in brief

Who's who at the UPU

A passion for print

Name: Jean-Luc Voisard

Position: Print-shop head

Nationality: Swiss



If you are reading this magazine in German, Spanish, Arabic, Russian or Chinese, it was printed by Jean-Luc Voisard and his team. Voisard heads the print shop on the first floor of the International Bureau (IB). He and his four colleagues are responsible for printing the hundreds of agendas, circular letters, regulations and publications that keep the UPU's member countries informed.

"We print all the conference documents too," he says, gesturing to a wall of binders stuffed with papers in the United Nations' six languages.

The print shop also produces CDs, DVDs, envelopes, barcode labels and occasionally publications in book-style. Voisard's team also looks after the 28 office printers scattered throughout the IB.

Voisard oversees the busy shop floor from a glassed-in office that his colleagues affectionately call the aquarium. Its several tables are piled high with printing equipment and finished documents.

"As head, I organize the production work. I can handle all the machines too, doing small repairs, know the software, and work on the floor, when someone is absent," Voisard said.

He admits to a long-held passion for his profession. "I was always interested in anything to do with graphics, everything about books,

the printed word, the laying out of words on a page," he said. With a four-year training course as a print specialist behind him, followed by years of experience, Voisard heard there was an opening at the IB in 1997. His application was successful.

Outside work, Voisard spends time with his four children and works on his languages. He is fluent in French and Spanish and wants to improve his English. "I am doing a course; it's hard but I'm trying," he says.

Voisard is also an avid hockey and football fan and a midfielder on the IB football team. **RP**

World Post Day on Facebook

The UPU will use World Post Day on 9 October as the launch theme for its new Facebook page. To drum up interest before the big day, check it out now, become a friend and invite others to join too.

Facebook and other social media tools offer the UPU an opportunity to increase its communication efforts, reaching new audiences and keeping people everywhere informed about our work and projects, postal issues in general.

The theme of this year's annual World Post Day message from the UPU Director General is: "The Post, an invaluable public service worldwide". Watch it on the UPU's YouTube channel or on the new Facebook page. **RL**



www.facebook.com/universalpostalunion

www.youtube.com/universalpostalunion

Lithium batteries

Air transport not on the list

In the last issue of *Union Postale* (June 2011), readers were informed that new provisions on the transport of items containing lithium batteries would come into force on October 1, 2011.

A new development, however, means that the provisions coming into force on that date will apply to all modes of transport, except air. Further discussions on aligning the International Civil Aviation Authority's own provisions with the changes made to the UPU's Convention will take place in October 2011.

For further information, please contact: David Bowers, david.bowers@upu.int, +41 31 350 31 11. **FM**



Quality of Service Fund clocks up 10 years

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Since its launch on April 23, 2001, the UPU's Quality of Service Fund (QSF) has invested more than 98 million USD in 600 projects across the globe to improve service levels in letter post.



.....
By
Rhéal LeBlanc

Burundi is a small country, covering some 28,000 km². The Post employs over 600 people and operates 53 post offices and a single sorting centre. Back in 2008, it was struggling to deliver 70 per cent of letters addressed to inhabitants of Bujumbura, the capital, within one working day of posting or J+1 as it is known within the postal industry. Elsewhere in the country, 65 per cent of letters were delivered by J+2: a respectable result but postal managers knew they could do better.

To transport mail to and from the airport, the Post had only a single open-top 4x4 truck. It was not unusual for mail dispatches, exposed to the elements, to be blown away by a gust of wind or soaked by rain. Something needed to be done.

A simple but effective QSF project, involving the purchase of two vehicles, which protect mail from the elements, changed everything. One of the two new trucks enabled the Post to make more frequent runs between the exchange office and the airport, based on flight times and a revised mail forwarding plan, while the other was assigned to mail deliveries in the country's north.

Lasting results

Today, not only are mail dispatches travelling to and from the airport in secure and weatherproof conditions, but delivery times have also improved significantly thanks to faster forwarding of incoming mail to the sorting centre. Some 90 per cent of mail is now delivered in J+1 in Bujumbura, beating the target of 80 per cent. In the rest of the country, 80 per cent of mail is delivered by J+2, compared with an initial target of 75 per cent.

Lazare Ndabubaha, QSF coordinator at the Burundi Post, is delighted with the results. And he talks excitedly about a new project, due to be presented to the QSF trustees for approval, to consolidate the current performance level in Bujumbura and increase J+2 delivery to 85 per cent elsewhere in the country. "If the project is approved, we will replace one vehicle and buy nine new motorcycles to carry mail... right into villages that can only be reached by dirt tracks," Ndabubaha said.

There are many such QSF stories. From Benin to Zambia, a multitude of projects have improved letter-post service quality, especially in terms of improving transmission and delivery times, adopting new technologies to better manage mail volumes, purchasing new equipment or improving mail security. As befits its role of improving universal service, the QSF is funded through an increase in the terminal dues paid to countries to compensate them for the delivery of incoming international mail; with five billion items on the move each year, the sums involved are not insignificant.

Humble beginnings

Since its creation, the QSF has proven to be a stable source of funding: a one-of-a-kind postal development funding mechanism directly linked to the UPU's mission. Its funds are similar to credits put at the disposal of beneficiary countries, to be paid out if a project proposal is approved by the QSF board of trustees.

At the end of 2010, the amount available for new projects stood at 46 million USD. Eleven countries each had funds or credits totalling more than one million USD, while 10 had between 500,000 and one million USD. Sixty-four had funds of 100,000–500,000 USD and 92 had under 100,000 USD.

In the first year of the QSF's existence, fewer than 10 projects were submitted. Ten years on, its board of trustees, which is responsible for examining, approving and monitoring the progress of all projects, typically gives the green light to over 50 initiatives each year. It approved 57 new projects in 2010. These included a project in Mexico, costing an estimated 1.3 million USD, which will enable the Post to improve its postal operations through the building of an automated sorting centre. In Côte d'Ivoire, where the Post suffered as a result of the recent civil war, a project totalling 123,000 USD will lead to improvements in mail deliveries in Abidjan, the economic capital, and in four other major cities. Suriname is developing an addressing and postcode system, while the Bulgarian Post, thanks to



Nearly 400,000 USD from the QSF bought 260 handheld personal digital assistants for Lebanon Post's letter carriers. Staff now use them to optimize delivery of registered items to meet international standards. (Photo: Liban Post)



A multimillion dollar project helped China Post develop sophisticated tools to translate addresses in non-Chinese characters on incoming international mail into Chinese ones to enable better processing. (Photo: China Post)

two projects totalling over a million USD, will improve the reliability and accessibility of postal services along with mail processing in airport processing centres and international exchange offices.

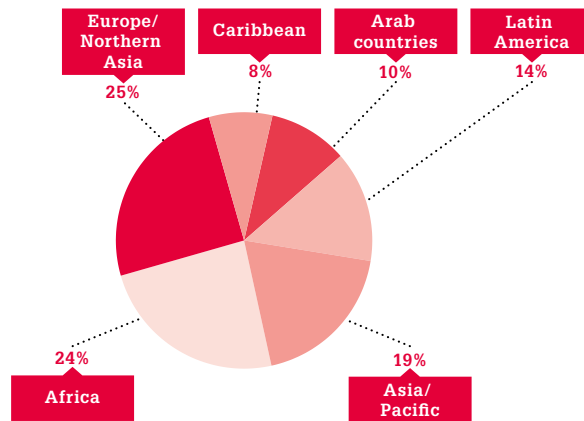
Lasting quality

Denise Vreuls has been QSF project manager since 2004. Vreuls, who will retire in November 2011, has seen the QSF go from strength to strength. Her team at the UPU headquarters has grown from two to eight

people and she oversaw the inception of regional funding projects in 2004 and global projects in 2008 and the introduction of field evaluation of projects in 2004. Also on this list was the adoption at the 2008 UPU Congress of new operating rules for the QSF, providing both fairer distribution and more significant financial resources to the countries that needed them most, particularly the least developed countries.

While the QSF can be proud of the hundreds of projects that it has inspired countries to submit over the

Distribution of projects by region at December 31, 2010



past decade, its role does not begin and end with the submission and completion of a project, says Vreuls. Every project must meet real, measurable targets and improvements in quality of service need to be seen in the long term. "The goal of a project is not just to buy vehicles or install a new software tool. These actions are just means to an end: it's all about achieving lasting postal service quality in the country," said Vreuls.

In this context, project evaluation is essential. Vreuls emphasizes that the project follow-up could not be any more rigorous. The use of funds assigned to a country is set out in reports presented to the nine members of the board of trustees, who meet four times a year. Since 2007, the QSF awards annually recognize countries that have performed best in achieving or exceeding their project targets.

Every project is evaluated independently, either by experts recruited in the field or by the seven UPU regional project coordinators based in different regions of the world. The evaluation of a project normally takes place two years after it has been completed, so as to properly measure the lasting impact of the steps taken to improve quality of service.

During a recent project evaluation mission, an expert noted that the motorcycles purchased with QSF funds were being used to carry items for EMS, the postal express product, which is not subject to terminal dues and as such is not eligible for QSF resources. The country was obliged to either reimburse the cost of these vehicles or buy a new set of motorcycles from its own funds and assign them to letter-post deliveries.

Durable improvement

Magali Zegarra, QSF project assistant for Latin America and French-speaking Africa, believes the QSF has given beneficiary Posts the basic tools they need to better manage their projects. "The QSF means project management,

pure and simple," she says. "Our close monitoring of projects promotes responsible behaviour."

Asked whether the QSF has really contributed to improved service quality, Vreuls is unequivocal: "Project evaluations show that the great majority of results are achieved or even exceeded and improvements to the national postal service are long-lasting. The QSF has proven to be one of the great tools for helping countries improve their quality of service."

Looking forward, Vreuls added: "What we need to do now is analyze the results to demonstrate the impact of these national projects at a worldwide level, which is a less straightforward matter. Only the results of quality of service measurement programmes, like the UPU's Global Monitoring System, will tell us whether the QSF has led to an overall improvement in operators' performance globally."

Relationship of trust

The close relations maintained between members of the International Bureau's QSF team and the QSF coordinators in each country have played no small part in the QSF's success. Vreuls and Zegarra recognize that they and their colleagues enjoy a special relationship with these coordinators, who do not hesitate to call them by their first name on the phone or in e-mails or to pay them a visit during sessions of the Postal Operations Council or Council of Administration. "We build a relationship of trust with our coordinators," says Vreuls. "This is essential if we are to cooperate as we should."

For Burundi Post's Ndabubaha, who has been national coordinator since the Fund's inception, the QSF has proven its worth. "It's a good thing. It helps developing countries to improve quality of service for letter post. It should be kept going in the future." **RL**

“The goal of a project is not just to buy vehicles or install a new software tool. These actions are just means to an end: it’s all about achieving lasting postal service quality in the country.”



QSF facts

- Between 2001 and December 2010, the QSF funded almost 600 projects throughout the world, totalling 98,334,000 USD.
- The first country to benefit from the QSF was Benin in April 2001, with a project to improve access to postal services in outlying areas of the economic capital, Cotonou.
- Chile and Argentina are the countries that have submitted the largest number of QSF projects over the years (19 and 16 respectively).
- There have been 18 regional projects and eight global projects benefiting groups of countries.
- At December 31, 2010, 45.95 million USD was available to beneficiary countries.
- On average, 13 million USD is paid into the QSF each year.

Posts ID the world

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In some countries, proving your identity is becoming as easy as sending a letter. An increasing number of Posts are adding identification (ID) verification to their range of services.

.....
**By
Ruby Pratka**

The solutions offered by Posts range from the straightforward to the high tech, from a proof of address card to an electronic proof of identity on a chip card or USB stick. Others enable customers to prove their identity at their local post offices, allowing them to buy products, like mobile phones, and apply for certain jobs.

Moving into the ID business is a leap many Posts could have taken a decade ago but did not, according to Kristian Sund, senior lecturer in business strategy at the University of Middlesex, Great Britain. "To be honest... 10 to 15 years ago it was too early for any Post to enter this market simply because a majority of them were relatively 'un-diversified' and still government agencies," Sund explained.

However, the postal world has changed. "Today... Posts are diversifying, becoming innovative and now have the regulatory freedom to pursue new opportunities," added Sund.

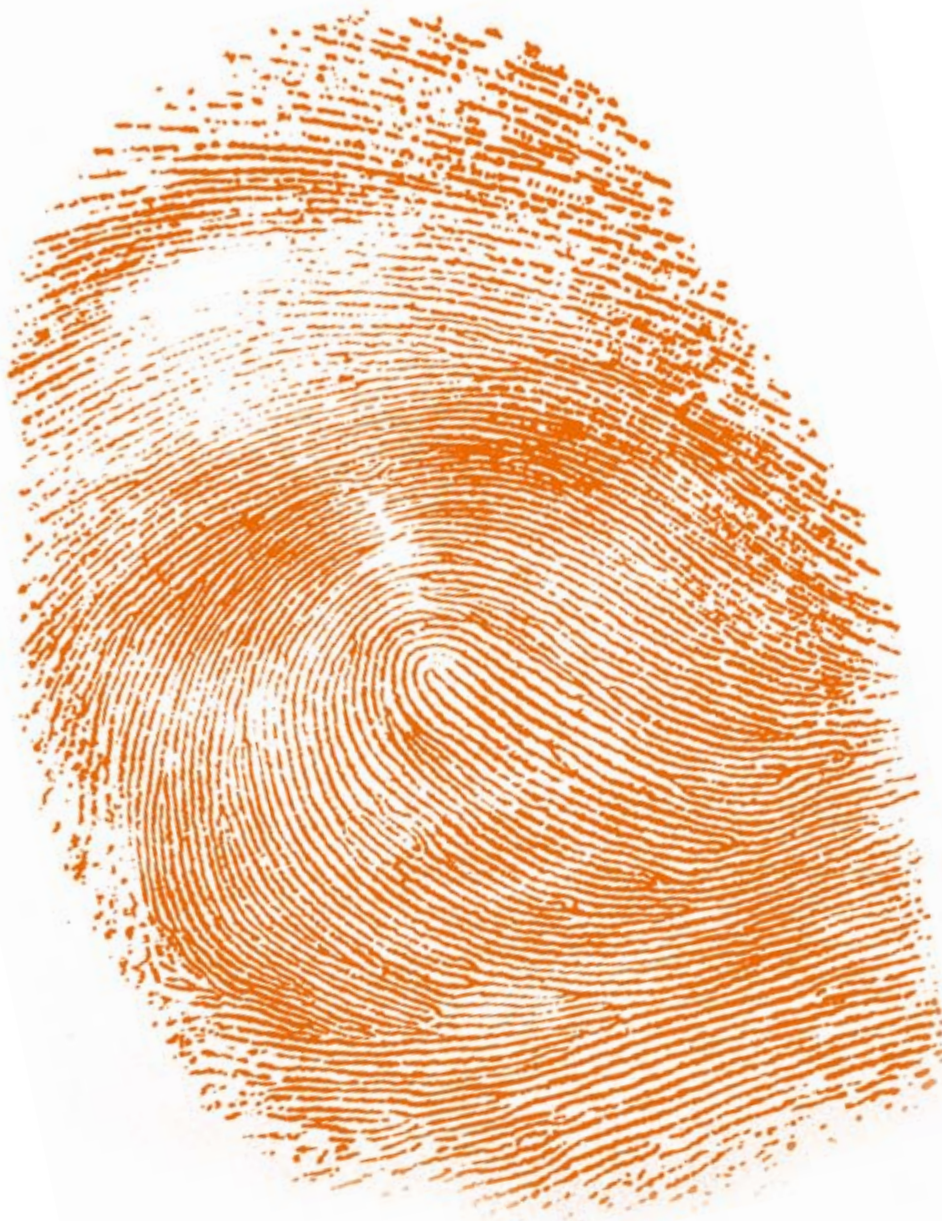
Late bloomers

Although late entrants to the ID market, Posts may have some advantages. "First and foremost, Posts are a trusted brand. We already trust them to deal with our

physical addresses and mail – extending this trust to digital addresses and mail seems reasonable," said Sund. "A second advantage is the ability to link the physical and digital. In other words, there is the opportunity for seamless and secure hybrid mail solutions," he added.

Australia Post has been providing various regional identification services for over 20 years. The Post's "trusted brand, unrivalled retail network and strong understanding of customers' evolving needs" make it "well placed to offer reliable and secure identity services", according to an Australia Post spokesperson. The Post added 2.4 million identity-related transactions were carried out on behalf of businesses and regional and federal government bodies in the financial year 2009–10.

"We expect this figure to increase in the next financial year. Some of these services include Australian and British passport applications... licensing services for drivers in South Australia, National Police Certificate and Working with Children card applications," the Post said.



First base

For Posts entering a market, which is competitive, catering to the business to government (B2G) segment might be a good starting point, says Sund.

"Serving the B2G segment... helps start the venture in a strong position. Entering the market requires a strong strategy... any start-up needs a first customer. For Posts that have traditionally worked closely with or have even been owned by governments, having the latter as a customer can be a good way to start down the road of such electronic services," said Sund.

For those postal operators keen to take a bite of the apple, Sund sounds a note of caution. "This is one particular niche market that may hold some opportunities for Posts but this does not mean that it makes business sense for every Post to enter this market."

As for implementation, he warns against re-inventing the wheel. "If there is a good solution out there that you can purchase or licence, customize as needed, and on which you can put your own brand, then that is preferable to trying to develop your own in-house solution from scratch."

For its part, Canada Post partnered with a private firm, BackCheck, to launch an ID verification service in March 2011. "BackCheck approached us. They needed a partner that had the reach and technical capability of Canada Post and could be trusted by their customers," says the Post's spokesperson, Anick Losier. "Canada Post already conducts over 500,000 transactions per year for our partners, such as passports and student loans, that involve some form of data capture and delivery, so we are an organization that the general public trusts with their private information."

Canadians needing a background check to apply for a job or volunteer position can fill out an online form and present it at any post office with government-approved ID. Counter staff witness the signature and scan the documents through to BackCheck, which then completes the check. The service is usually requested by the employer and is free for the applicant. Losier says some 20,000 checks have been performed since the service began. "The volume is steadily increasing month over month and is nearing 4,000 requests monthly," she added.



Bigger players

The ID market is already dominated by the private sector. "This is a competitive market with a number of strong competitors. One of the market leaders for authentication services is VeriSign, owned by Symantec, itself a leader in IT security," Sund said.

However, late starters like the Posts have unusual assets on their side. "Posts... [have] some jokers up the sleeve that may prove valuable. What existing competitors do not have is a retail presence, such as post offices. They also do not have the strong brand presence of the Post," underlined Sund.

This very reach can be hugely advantageous, says Umesh Verma of India Post's business development directorate. "The post office is very accessible for the public; we have a lot of post offices in India and the postmen know the people," Verma said.

India Post offers a proof-of-address and identity card, which has enjoyed a recent revival after a write-up in a major national newspaper. "Many things in India, such as train travel and domestic air travel, require proof of ID," Verma explains. "There are many households in India where no one has any kind of ID. Now they can apply for one at the post office and it is easy to get."

In the past, Verma says, the postal identity card – in existence since 1890 – "basically worked to pick up and deliver mail". Like the Post itself, the card has evolved.

"Now it is a value-added product, a plastic card with many other features," he says. The holder's date of birth, telephone number and blood group, amongst other details, can be stored on the card. In participating regions, a person can download or pick up a form, verify his or her details at a local post office and pay a 250 INR (5.50 USD) application and processing fee to obtain the card.

Verma says the programme in this form is being introduced gradually across India. "We started it three years ago as a pilot project in Tamil Nadu state. [It generated] good revenues and the reaction from the public was outstanding," says Verma. "We decided to launch it on the national level in 2011." He says 800 major regional post offices have already received implementation instructions and India Post hopes to roll out the programme in all of India's 155,000 post offices in the years to come.

Going digital

Other Posts that have entered the ID sector have gone digital. "It's very important to speak about the physical postal network, but now Posts are going increasingly digital. Posts have a major role in connecting digital and physical identities," says Farah Abdallah, an electronic business expert at the UPU. Abdallah says the Posts of Saudi Arabia, Tunisia, Qatar, Austria, Italy, France, Spain

“The Post is an organization that the general public trusts with their private information.”

.....
India Post's card



and Denmark are already providing customers a digital ID as a means of facilitating e-commerce and making online transactions more secure.

The *e-dinar* programme of Tunisia's Post sells chip cards with two personal ID numbers (PINs). An eight-digit PIN is used to confirm online purchases, whereas a four-digit code enables cash withdrawals from a postal bank account. The codes are also used to electronically sign university application forms and registrations for the federal postal academy and driving licence programme.

Legal validity

In Switzerland, the Post quickly became an established player when the SuisseID programme was launched in 2010. The product is available as a USB stick or chip card. Users plug in the device and log in with a secure PIN, enabling them to sign legal and financial documents and approve purchases electronically.

“The Swiss government launched this product to create a standardized electronic proof of identity in Switzerland,” said Swiss Post spokesperson, Nathalie Salamen. “These signatures have legal validity. This greatly simplifies electronic transactions; for example, you can now do all the paperwork necessary for buying a house over the internet.”

Entering the market was a response to the rapidly changing times. “We have always transported letters,

newspapers and advertising. But this is a different communication market where we are in competition with SMS and e-mail,” said Salamen. “We cannot pass up the chance to diversify digitally. Instead of saying to customers, ‘please keep sending letters,’ we’re entering the digital services market.”

For the moment, Salamen says SuisseID accounts for a small but important slice of profits at Swiss Post, compared to the mail sector and its banking arm, PostFinance. “We are a communication company and this is a communication market,” says Salamen. “These niche activities may bring less profit now but they are essential to ensure the future of our company.” **RP**

Quality jobs, skills and services

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Philip Jennings, director of Uni Global Union, explains why his organization, which brings together 1,000 unions in 150 countries, is focusing on innovation in the postal business.

.....
By Faryal Mirza

Photo:
Uni Global Union

Union Postale: What is Uni Global Union?

Philip Jennings: We are what we say we are: a global union. Unions today live in a global economy. Our business is to build trade unions and bring them together to improve the working conditions of our members and above all to put a human face on the unacceptable side of globalisation that most workers are experiencing these days.

What side of globalisation is the postal sector seeing?

The postal sector is one of the first sectors of the economy to globalize in terms of communications between peoples across national borders. Postal services have this wonderful ethic to which we are very attached to: the universal service at an affordable price. We think the postal sector is a natural monopoly in terms of what it is trying to do and we have seen this

great value perverted by an ideological approach to globalisation. Postal services have not escaped this. If you look at... the changes that have taken place, which come out of the Chicago model of thinking, that you privatize, deregulate and open up a market to other competitors in the hope that the universal service and affordable price provision will be maintained, it has been a disaster.



We are in fighting mode and think that postal services are worth fighting for. We are not just fighting for the workers but also for the broader public and that is why we do not mind taking on the regulators, governments and some of the crazed thinking that we see.

You mention the negative ideology that has pervaded the postal system. What can employees do?

First of all, we see a new world out there for the Post and logistics.

What we have to do as unions is to make sure we have an organized workers' voice in the traditional postal network and in the new competitors. We think it is important

for incumbent operators that we have a union voice in the competitors. So, our message to the employees in the new carriers is: get organized.

What we find are courageous people prepared to make a stand and join a union but that they are not able to join. We think that one of the terms of entry for these competitors into the postal or logistics market should be to follow the example of national Posts where the right to negotiate and have a collective work agreement is applied throughout the industry. In terms of employees, the union is a tremendous utility and offers added value as it is an important

place where they can take their concerns. It will be a place where they will be inspired and where there will be a place to innovate.

I am sorry to say that the track record of some of the newer entrants to the market is not good. They should know better. Everyone needs rules of behaviour. Even though there are ideological changes in the world, there are still a sufficient number out there that want to see a world with a human face of globalisation, which is still socially responsible.

Given market forces and the state of flux the business world has found itself in the last few years, it has been argued that the Posts and the concept of a universal service are relics of an old style of doing business.

No way! We, as a trade union movement, are attached to universal values of solidarity, social justice, accountability and giving people opportunities. And we are there to defend those basic values and to show that we have an organisation on the ground. In terms of postal services, the need for access to the universal service at an affordable price is paramount and that basic goal is not diminished because we have this great technological revolution taking place.

What we think is important is to say to the postal operators, regulators and governments that you have to look at your postal services in a new way. Unions deliver innovation in Posts. Whereas in the past, we would have looked at the legal and delivery aspects and all the mechanics of providing a postal service, we realize now that there is a massive hole in the discussion. There are not enough people talking up the postal service and about

Potted CV

Philip Jennings is the first general secretary of UNI Global Union, which was launched in 2000 as a union innovation to address global challenges. With 20 million affiliated members from a range of largely private sector service industries, including commerce, banking, telecom, business and information technologies, graphical, property services, media and entertainment and the Post and logistics sectors.

Jennings was previously general secretary of the white collar FIET and began his trade union career with the UK finance union. Welsh-born, he has a Masters in Economics from the London School of Economics and a BA (Hons), Business Affairs, from Bristol Polytechnic.

Uni Global Union is a member of the UPU's Consultative Committee.

“We are in fighting mode and think that postal services are worth fighting for.”

new innovations that could be taking place. Our business is not just about protecting the relic. We think there is value in the universal service and that you can build new services around that, even in the modern age of technology. We live in a new age, that's quite clear, so why can't we innovate in the provision of postal services and talk it up? There is a great affection for the post-office brand.

How far does Uni Global Union's role go in putting innovation on the table?

You often hear that the trade union movement is often looking backwards but that is not in our brief. Our job is to look forward. We have a social responsibility to our members and we are a voice of change but in a constructive sense, such as how we can build on what we have instead of getting into a death spiral.

The 'innovations' we [have seen so far] are driven ideologically by a low-cost model – to be competitively uniquely on price terms and to let someone else innovate – shattering the business model the Post has developed. The UPU should be leading the charge for innovation and we are going to be the voice for those innovations. We have changed: Uni Global Union is

a metaphor for change in trade unionism in the world.

Unfortunately, we hear that collective agreements are passé, as are decent working conditions, a fair wage, decent hours and pension, that these can no longer fit in the new innovative world in postal services. Wrong! Want to de-motivate your workforce and get negative thinking in your management? We don't like it.

How do your unions react when you speak about innovation?

I have been struck by our unions' enthusiasm. They are in the trenches, fighting for the integrity of their sector. They are in a scrap with their governments about changing ownership... it is very difficult to think when you're in the trenches; as soon as you put your head up, there is a danger you get shot.

We have to give people self-confidence and courage and to create... that space where the unions can think creatively. Ask a postman what additional services he could provide. He has many ideas. Just ask. We have said to our unions: innovation in Posts has to be as important as wages, hours of work, pensions and so on. We want to break out of that mould as well as. When you put us at the

table where innovations are discussed, we will deliver.

What kind of innovations could be on the cards?

You have someone on the street in communities. There must be other things that these people can do in addition to putting letters through letterboxes in terms of their utility in the community and providing other services piggy-backing on that.

I am very struck by the fact that, coming out of a financial crisis, there is a huge space for Posts to provide financial services. Why? Because they are trusted, they have the network and can buy in the know-how, so finance is also important.

Give us a seat at the table and we will be constructive partners. Whatever the nature of the storm out there, give workers a seat at the table and a voice on the job and the future.

If Posts decide to enter the business of financial services, how do you as a union of unions deal with the challenges that come thereafter?

I do not like the way postal services are going. They are going down the track of temporary work, de-skilling and de-professionalism, which is not the way to go.

“Give us a seat at the table...”

We have this rare asset of workers, who know their communities and have face-to-face contact with people, who are skilled at dealing with the range of issues, which post offices have to deal with.

The future is about having people with the skills to do the job throughout the services sector and we are going to see more professionalisation generally. I am not buying that we cannot train people up, that you cannot motivate them to provide new services. It requires commitment and investment in people and strategy. And you will find the postal unions and people ready to meet these new challenges.

What we don't like is this lack of ambition and cynicism, this running away from collective agreements and secure employment. How the hell can you provide a decent postal service if you are not sure what your hours, wages and holidays are? Where's the motivation there? So, it needs a new approach: quality jobs, quality skills, quality services. And we can succeed.

Returning to globalisation and the recent round of liberalisation of the postal sector in Europe, what effects did these have on postal workers?

There is a lot of frustration out there. The European Union is not being honest. We adopted a piece

of legislation subject to several rounds of negotiations. We got commitments. First of all, the basis upon which the legislation was built was all ideological. They promised to provide the evidence but they never provided one decent shred of evidence that this deregulation and liberalisation would work and we still haven't seen it. They made a commitment that there would be a study on the social implications of change and there would be social safety nets built in and they have done precious little to ensure that in practice.

Who is going to come in and invest in a network of this scale? Who? The only party interested is private equity and all they will do is accelerate the destruction of the national postal networks. I know the world of private equity... [and it is] only interested in niche areas. You have a cannibalized postal network; the postal operator has an infrastructure and workers it has to invest in and then there are people on the sidelines... cherry-picking... this is a corruption, not a free market; it is cannibal behaviour.

What about the World Bank's interest in the postal network?

The World Bank is drinking the same snake oil. We have had a battle with the World Bank for years to try and get them to understand that they have a social re-

sponsibility. For the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank to go waltzing into every structural adjustment situation and say 'privatize and deregulate', has not worked. Look at the advantage that the postal network can give you in the emerging markets, in developing countries; don't go there and shatter it. We need to build infrastructure and maintain the postal network even if people are on their mobile phones.

Our relationship with the World Bank has been difficult because of structural adjustment. If we can change the debate and, with the World Bank and the UPU, develop the network and capacity and add new services... it would require funding but would be about innovation. That would be a good thing.

One final question about the relationship with the UPU: quo vadis?

I have to stress that this is a unique arrangement: there is no other UN agency in the world that enables dialogue among operators, the postal workers and unions. On where we can build our relationship... not in a carping way, not in the 'it's that man from the union again'. We want a relationship that is dynamic and innovative where we have a seat at the table. **FM**



Last Mile Project

As an example of how postal workers are enthusiastic about innovation, read the following excerpt from *The Postal Record*, August 2011, from the United States' National Association of Letter Carriers (NALC):

"If you really want to imagine the possibilities for the future of the US Postal Service (USPS), there's no better place to go than the minds of the people who are out on routes every day – letter carriers. That's the goal of the Last Mile Project, which asks letter carriers to submit new... ideas on how to take advantage of the USPS's unique network of human contact with every single address in America and presence in every city and town.

In response to a request in *The Postal Record* for ideas, hundreds of letter carriers sent letters with one, two or a dozen. NALC president, Fredric Rolando, said: "In this era of amazing technology, some of the most imaginative ideas may lead to something promising. We have received a great deal of solid, exciting ideas for new business – some common-sense and some strokes of genius."

A letter carrier from Missouri suggested charging a premium for putting a mailer's piece, such as an advertisement or fundraising letter, on the top of the stack in each mailbox. Create partnerships to help small businesses, such as eBay sellers, get started, using USPS services.

A carrier in Baltimore writes that USPS should sell secure, lock-

able mailboxes to protect from theft... and offer a mailbox installation service.

Another in New Jersey, after just a few months on the job, writes that he already sees "opportunities hanging on the vine waiting to be picked". He urges the USPS to centralize and market its address data, stressing to advertisers that it is the single most reliable and complete source of addresses available.

Set up partnerships with libraries to delivery borrowed materials to and from library users, wrote a letter carrier in Seattle. A letter carrier in New Jersey sent two dozen exciting ideas for services letter carriers could perform for a fee, from reading meters... to watching for damage or maintenance problems in neighbourhoods for government or private businesses (for example, a tree service looking for downed trees to dispose of) to checking in on elderly or disabled loved ones and sending regular updates on them for a fee...

The USPS has continuously evolved over the last 200-plus years to meet the emerging needs of the country. Its growth has always depended on adding new functions while fulfilling the old functions as long as they are needed. In this way, our past can be an inspiration for what comes next."

 www.nalc.org

Barbados and China win first prize

.....

A great oak in Guyana's Windsor Forest and an observant tree helped 15-year-old Charlée Gittens and 13-year-old Wang Sa take gold.

.....
By
Rhéal LeBlanc

Photo:
getty images

Grenada's Jonathan Andrew, 14, and Botswana's Charlene Tlagae, 15, were respectively awarded the silver and bronze medals.

To mark the International Year of Forests, young people were asked to imagine themselves as a tree writing a letter to explain why it was important to protect forests. Both the Barbadian and Chinese entries were praised by the international jury, composed of Jan McAlpine, the United Nations Forum on Forests Secretariat, Jean-Paul Paddack, WWF International (World Wide Fund for Nature), Daniel Shaw, the International Union for the Conservation of Nature, and Jean-François Thivet, philately expert at the UPU and passionate collector of forests stamps.

The jury called Barbados's entry "a powerful, personal and touching composition dealing with the issue in a very global manner. Comparing the plight of forests to some of the world's great

crises sends a strong message about the importance of protecting forests". As for China's entry, the jury said: "A well crafted and whimsical composition. Using a parable of two villages to tackle the theme, the writer does an excellent job of bringing readers into the story in a way that people are able to relate to it."

It is the first time in the competition's 40-year-history that Barbados has won top prize. It is the fifth time that China takes the top award, having also won second or third prizes four times in the past.

Of Grenada's entry, the jury said: "By touching upon various angles of the theme, the writer's presentation of the benefits of forests is well handled and educational." Botswana's entry was "a delightful and personal composition explaining the benefits of the many plants and trees found in forests and why they need to be protected. The writer brings in lovely





references about how some cultures perceive or depend on plants and trees”.

The UPU’s director general, Edouard Dayan, joined the jury in congratulating all winners and participants. He said: “Despite living in an increasingly digital age, the more than two million often hand-written letters the competition generates worldwide annually show the tremendous value of the written word. The UPU is pleased that its 40-year-old competition continues to foster an appreciation for the art of letter-writing, encouraging young people to express their deepest and most insightful thoughts on topics that concern us all, while teaching them the importance of proper addressing.”

Special mentions

The jury also awarded special mentions to the compositions from Trinidad and Tobago, Montenegro, Nigeria, Ukraine and Benin. Award winners usually receive their prizes in their country on October 9, World Post Day, during ceremonies organized by their countries’ Posts.

More than 60 UPU member countries participated in this year’s edition of the competition. Worldwide, an

estimated two million young people up to the age of 15 participate in the competition at the national level. Winning national letters are then judged at the international level.

The theme of the 2012 UPU International Letter-Writing Competition for Young People is: “Write a letter to an athlete or sports figure you admire to explain what the Olympic Games mean to you.” Participating member countries have until April 30, 2012 to submit their top national letter to the international competition.

The UPU’s International Letter-Writing Competition for Young People was officially launched in 1971. The competition aims to make young people aware of the important role postal services play in our societies, develop their skills in composition and the ability to express their thoughts clearly, and foster their enjoyment of letter writing. **RL**



www.upu.int/en/letterwritingcompetition

Charlée Gittens' letter to a timber company

Dear Mr CEO,

Although this letter is addressed to Barakat Timbers, I am writing to anyone who is willing to listen. You humans constantly rave about... your World Wars and civil unrests, but what of ours? From the beginning we have been murdered, but we were not greatly angered for we understood your necessity. Now you don't just take what you need, but damage our habitats to such an extent that we shall never again thrive in the same location. You heartless beasts who claim superiority yet cannot live in peace as we do? I am a Great Oak in the Windsor Forest of Guyana and I say stop! Not even for my species' sake, but for yours. Do you not see how integral we are for the survival of your kind?



Global warming is a ubiquitous crisis of this era which stems from several causes. The burning of fossil fuels, which produce greenhouse gases, which are by definition gases that trap heat in the atmosphere, has been one of the greatest detrimental factors of global warming. The gases cause an increase in Earth's temperature, damaging the ozone which is the most important layer of atmosphere involved in the protection of life on Earth. It shields you from the true brunt of the sun's rays, absorbing a colossal 97-99 per cent of harmful ultraviolet rays. Greenhouse gases are emitted as a by-product of burning fossil fuels such as coal and crude oil. To ignore this situation is to leave you vulnerable.

Other than with the few exceptions of phytoplankton and chemosynthetic organisms, plants are situated in the first trophic level of all food chains. All energy is obtained from the sun by humans indirectly and the only way to gain some of that energy other than from the miniscule part played by the other autotrophic organisms is from plants. Why? Plants use sunlight energy, water and carbon dioxide gas to create energy to sustain ourselves and to grow and develop. Humans cannot obtain energy in this way and neither can any other mammals; therefore you gain this energy indirectly by eating plants whether by eating the plant itself or an animal somewhere in the food chain through which the energy flows. To leave us vulnerable or to decimate us is suicidal.

Erosion is becoming a major concern on Earth. Frequent mudslides and avalanches destroying towns, taking lives and no one would believe if I told them the answer. Go simply au naturale. When walking past a Great Oak such as I, you usually marvel at my height and circumference. Rarely does someone think of what is growing below my torso. I too have legs, though I prefer not to walk. Call it laziness; I see it as an investment in prime real estate. Working along with other materials, roots play a big part in keeping soil compact. When speaking of soil, humans are very ignorant of its layers. As topsoil is removed, subsoil is exposed and erosion occurs. Subsoil does not easily support agriculture, flooding occurs more readily and in short, life on Earth increases in hardship. Once again I offer you a simple solution. Let nature do her job.

Many who read this will not take heed. But a word to the wise is enough, so for anyone who should be interested I may offer some suggestions to aid in the continuation of your species. Take a look at Beijing, China... Look at the fog that surrounds the city and realize that you are on the same path. You may not see it now, a bit like getting taller. You don't realize it has happened unless you measure your height constantly or until there is such a difference that it is impossible not to have recognized it. Will you only stop when it is too late? Reduce the use of products made in factories that produce greenhouse gases. Don't drive a half-mile to the supermarket for a box of milk. Take a nice walk through the refreshing air we recycle and provide for you. It's therapeutic and healthy. Use reusable plastics. Plant more trees around your homes. In this age of technology, use your electronics and less paper. But there will be those who will pay me no mind and I say to you in the words of Gerard Manley Hopkins, 'And for all this nature is never spent'. The sun will continue to rise in the East and set in the West, but should you continue on this hell-bent path you will cease to be. As you take this suicidal walk, take note that I will never be conquered and shall rise as you fall.

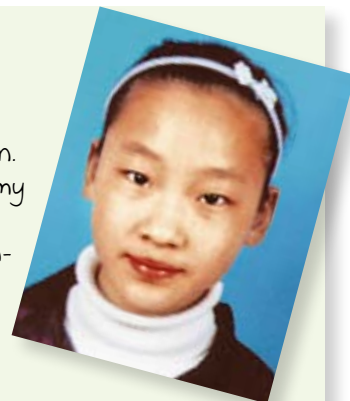
Yours sincerely,
Woody Branche



Wang Sa's tale of two villages

Dear Humans, especially my young friends,

I am a tiny green sapling living in the midst of a verdant forest on an ancient mountain. I am writing to share with you a story I witnessed with my own eyes. On one side of my mountain sits the Western Village and on the other is the Eastern Village. In the past, these two villages were both very poor. All they possessed were the trees on this mountain. One day, the chief of the Western Village proclaimed he would lead the whole village onto the path of prosperity. He invited the Eastern Village to join him, but unexpectedly the Eastern Village turned down his offer. The chief of the Western Village scornfully said, "You poor short-sighted wretch!" With this retort, he sulked away.



The whole of the Western Village, men and women, young and old, climbed up the mountain and began to work very hard for their dream of wealth... They felled many of the trees on their side of the mountain. Sure enough, before long they indeed became richer. The villagers discovered the good things from the big money they made by cutting down so many trees. With this cash they bought TV sets, fridges and air-conditioners. During the day the Western Village became a bustling construction site, but at night it felt more like a graveyard. As my own branches grew bigger I shed my first little teardrops... The affluent Western Village became more disdainful of the Eastern Village. But the chief of the Eastern Village remained untroubled... "Forests are the wealth of all our generations - from our ancestors to our great-great-grandchildren. For our descendants' sake, we should not fight over trees with the Western Village. We will not cut down trees. Instead, we need to plant more trees. We will plant as many trees as they have cut down." When I heard these words, I cried again, this time tears of thanks. The chief of the Eastern Village did exactly as he said. He led his villagers to add forest on any bare land. As I stood growing taller and leafier at the peak, I looked down to see the mountain by the Western Village grow barer, losing all its green, until not a single blade of grass left. But the mountainside of the Eastern Village has still remained beautiful. That green mountain with clear blue waters is a true fairyland!

That summer turned extremely hot, with the sun scorching the earth. The air-conditioners in all the houses of the Western Village were turned on full blast, with the people trapped inside. Meanwhile, in the Eastern Village, people relaxed under the big shady trees, each with a cattail fan in hand, talking and laughing. The children played hide-and-seek, their laughter echoing throughout the whole village and the forests. I was moved to tears for a third time. This time I shed tears of pure joy. As a rule, humid hot days are followed by storms. It soon rained heavily for days on end... The earth below my roots started to loosen, and I saw small stones beginning to roll down the western side of the mountain. The dark skies rained on and on. At midnight the forest finally fell into a dead silence. Suddenly I was woken up by loud cries and screams for help from the Western Village. I was shocked: my worst nightmare was coming true! It was a huge mudslide.

...As soon as the sun's first clear rays revealed the disaster the next morning, the people of the Eastern Village rushed to the aid of the Western Village. They worked hard to pull the chief of the Western Village out of the terrible mud. They heard the chief say with his last breath, "All my fault... our trees gone..." ... Over the next years the Western Village, no longer felling and selling trees, began to learn from the Eastern Village. They first worked together to preserve the environment by planting trees. During the rebuilding and reforestation process everyone in the village grew to understand how they must protect the forests and nature. ... Ever since then, the two villages have grown adorned with greenery, with flowers blooming and birds singing everywhere. They have become beautiful scenic spots known far and wide. Many environment-conscious tourists are drawn to visit our mountain, and some find it hard to tear themselves away from the serene villages and forests.

This is the end of my story. My dear human friends, my wish is to tell you that preserving the forests is to safeguard the Earth on which you and I live, for the good of your future and mine. To destroy forests by the excessive cutting down of trees is to eventually bring disaster, not just to me, but to you too.

Your true friend,
A Tree prepared to care for humanity



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Southern Africa charts postal future

Ministers have laid out a new road map for the region's postal policy.

By
Ruby Pratka

The policy-makers from 11 countries officially committed to the universal service and expanding "access to services... and to geographical regions in which the postal service is non-existent or limited". They also expressed support for providing postal services that are affordable and accessible with a certain level of quality. Participating countries included Angola, Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

The communications and technology ministers met in Gaborone, Botswana, on June 14–16, 2011, and proposed sweeping revisions to the Southern African Development Community (SADC) protocol on postal services. These included new sections on the universal service, information and communications technology (ICT) and stakeholder relations.

"The protocol provides the broad framework for postal policy in the region... providing direction to governments in SADC member countries," said Gladys Mutyavaviri, the UPU's regional co-ordinator for southern and eastern Africa.

ICT boost

Ministries also pledged to support the use of ICTs to speed up transactions, maintain the postal network's security and improve financial services. Postal delivery and ICTs are handled by the same ministry or regulator in ten SADC member countries.

"Postal services [and ICTs] in Namibia are regulated by [the same] regulator, thus ICT issues in postal services should be reflected in SADC's [postal] protocol," said Henri Kassen, development director at the Namibian ICT ministry. "A review was done some time back with UPU technical input but it was never taken through the official structures of SADC for approval. Now we have [finally] managed to place it on the SADC ministers' agenda," he added.

Ministers also agreed to expand services and financial inclusion and establish regular dialogue between postal stakeholders both nationally and internationally.

The revised articles will now be submitted to the SADC Council of Ministers for consideration before being passed to the same's Summit for Heads of State and Government for final approval and adoption. This process could take several months.

Ministerial work

Changes were also made to the protocol's existing articles to highlight the fact that Posts play a large role in business development. "The protocol was last updated in 1998 and since then there have been three UPU Congresses [and] many technological development and changes. Posts have been providing the universal service but there [was] nothing about it in the policy framework [until now]," said Mutyavaviri.

Consultant Juan Ianni, who helped draft the amendments, said the protocol would help Posts in times of need. "It is a tool for [Posts] to use as an argument to get more resources [from governments]. It also harmonizes policy for the region... which should help the mail flow better. It puts pressure on governments and operators and can be used to push things forward."

Merger

Also during the Gaborone conference, the Southern Africa Postal Regulators Association merged with the Communications Regulators Association of Southern Africa. The expanded association will work to implement SADC regulations within the communication sector and harmonize postal and technological regulatory frameworks, according to Mutyavaviri. The merged group will be based in Botswana. **RP**

Robust results for Azerpocht's financial services

A year after a multimillion-dollar project to boost postal financial services wound up, Azerpocht (Azerbaijan) is reporting robust results. The total number of financial services transactions has increased from 14 million in 2005 to nearly 53 million at the end of 2010. Currently more than 600 post offices from a total of about 1,500 now provide a variety of new financial services.

The six-year project to develop postal financial services – financed by the World Bank and the Azeri government – had three broad aims: to provide connectivity for some 1,000 post offices, set up a new IT platform for key accounting and cash management functions and strengthen staff capacity. Financing came from a loan of some 13 million USD from the World Bank and 31 million USD from the Azeri government. Under the project's aegis, the Post experienced a significant restructure from 2005-10, involving the legal separation of its postal and financial services business, as well as the redundancy of 1,000 staff.

Before the project started in 2005, Azerpocht provided ordinary mail services, such as letter post, parcels, and basic financial services. The latter included the payment of pensions, which was subsequently transferred to a bank. Its postal network was three times larger than the country's banking network. Mike Edwards, country sector coordinator at the World Bank, said that the Post was faced with a number of challenges at the project start. These included a lack of skilled human resources, weak IT and accounting capabilities and the absence of connectivity.

"Azerbaijan had an unusual distribution of bank branches in the early 2000s. Most were located in and around Baku, the capital city. While it was well served, other urban areas were underserved and rural areas virtually unserved by banks," Edwards explained. With more than half of Azerbaijan's population in rural

areas, Azerpocht said the focus on boosting access to postal financial services in rural areas was an obvious choice.

Staff issues

With government investment in broadband connectivity and third party consultants providing a new IT system, the Swiss Secretariat for Economic Affairs supported the provision of staff training and development of an initial multi-year strategic plan. To ascertain the level of skills in existing staff, Azerpocht staff based at headquarters and in the regions had to sit an exam, says Edwards. The outcome: some 1,000 staff were made redundant, while many of those retained (especially in urban areas) and new hires alike were paid higher salaries. The training programme put in place focused on topics like customer service and modern business practices. The World Bank expert added that the results were plain to see in post offices.



A new rural postal office

"You see a difference in the city and in some rural areas. I have been pleasantly surprised that they are employing many newcomers at mid-career, as well as young people new to Azerpocht, who are enthusiastic as a consequence and more interested and capable in delivering good customer service," said Edwards.

By December 2010, more than half of the 1,029 post offices to be modernised under the project had full access to financial services on the new IT platform. In over 300 post offices in rural areas, customers can now make or receive domestic and international money transfers, pay their utility bills and exchange foreign currency, says Azerpocht. One future challenge will be to complete the modernisation of the remaining post offices in rural areas, numbering some 300, in the coming year. **FM**

New look for Czech staff

Česka Pošta (Czech Republic) employees will be looking sharp over the next few years as new uniforms are rolled out for over 21,000 staff. The uniforms will be provided over a three-year period to administrative staff as well as employees in delivery and processing positions, eventually reaching all staff.

"The new uniforms have a look that matches current trends and are nicer to wear," Česka Pošta announced. CEO Petr Zatloukal said a new outdoor collection was "designed from materials that will facilitate the hard work our employees must perform in any weather".

"Most importantly, our staff simply deserve better clothes," added the CEO.

The new-look uniforms replace the current outfits, which were designed ten years

ago. Costing 240 million CZK (14.2 million USD), Česka Pošta said the contract would save them 12 million CZK a year.

The changes are in line with a broader modernization plan at the organization. "The face of the mail will also change between now and the end of the year. We will be building 48 new branches in a new modular form, saving costs and making the space more useful and comfortable for the clients. The uniform is the same: much more modern and useful," said Zlatoukal. **RP**



Let's get paramedical

United States Postal Service (USPS) letter carriers could be on the front lines in the event of a bioterrorism attack in the US. The national Department of Health and Human Services Office of the Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response has issued 400,000 USD in grants to five municipal health departments to set up a programme to train letter carriers to deliver life-saving medication in the event of a biological attack.

The Minnesota Department of Health will receive half the grant money in order to run a full simulated attack in Minneapolis. Health departments in Boston, San Diego, Philadelphia and Louisville will each receive a 50,000 USD grant.

In the event of an anthrax attack, those potentially exposed would need to take antibiotics within 48 hours. The Department of Health and Human Services says home delivery of antibiotics by trained USPS mail carriers would augment existing plans, which ask residents to go to designated dispensing points and queue to receive medication. The US Food and Drug Administration has already authorized distribution of antibiotics prior to an attack to USPS volunteers, so that the latter can deliver these to the rest of the community.

"The fatality rate for people whose lungs are infected with anthrax is extremely high if they do not receive antibiotic treatment, which means the quicker health pro-

fessionals can get antibiotics into people's hands, the quicker we can protect health and save lives," said Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response Nicole Lurie in a statement. "The postal model offers an additional tool for local health departments to begin treating people potentially exposed to anthrax." **RP**

Digest

Australia

Australia Post has partnered with Rural Bank to offer postal banking services in the countryside. The two entities entered into a non-binding agreement for service distribution and are working towards a binding agreement. The country's two million rural citizens will be able to access Rural Bank accounts at over 3,200 post offices and open deposit accounts at any one of 1,400 offices. Also, 130 post offices in areas with a strong agribusiness presence will offer Rural Bank loans.

Austria

All **Austria Post** domestic shipments are now carbon neutral at no extra cost to customers. The operator says it continually seeks to reduce emissions and use alternative energy. Unavoidable carbon emissions will be offset by financial support for climate protection projects in Austria and abroad. "While other companies offer individual climate-neutral services, all shipments in Austria will be climate-neutral without exception," said CEO George Pözl.

Brazil

Correios expects to launch a bidding process in the next three months allowing independent franchisees to take over the running of 830 offices across the country. Maria dos Santos Guimaraes, Correios' vice president of network and customer relationships, said the franchising was part of an effort to improve access to postal services throughout Brazil. A final announcement about the bidding should be available later this year. Over 1,400 Correios offices are already running under franchise.

European Union

The **European Commission** is investigating whether the UK government's restructuring plans for Royal Mail go against state aid rules. The government plans to relieve Royal Mail of a pension deficit estimated at 8 billion GBP (13 million USD). Joaquin Almunia, EC com-

petition commissioner, said, while the EC "acknowledges the importance" of postal market reform in the UK, it "must ensure that the state measures do not provide undue [competitive] advantages to Royal Mail".

Germany

A Facebook application created by **Deutsche Post DHL** has won a prestigious design award. The app, called Social Memories, allows users to compile photos and comments from their Facebook profile into a glossy book, which is posted to them in the mail. The app won the Red Dot international design competition's communication design prize. "Deutsche Post DHL has always been the bearer of memories in the form of postcards and letters. Today, written correspondence has been mostly replaced with the digital kind... Social Memories brings this back in physical form," the Post said.

Great Britain

Royal Mail's famous red postboxes have become a target for thieves, according to GB's Sunday Mirror. The thieves likely use heavy cutting equipment to remove the boxes, which often turn up later in online auctions. Boxes dating from the reign of Queen Victoria can fetch 3,000 – 5,000 GBP at auction, although more recent boxes are sold for much less. "These old boxes are of great historical interest and we always try to get them back," Royal Mail told the newspaper.

India

Indian stamp lovers now have a place of their own. The National Philatelic Museum in Delhi opened on July 11. The museum showcases India's history, culture and achievements through stamps and also include displays on wildlife, technology and transport, according to India Post. The museum has an amphitheatre, a reference library and an 'artists' corner' where stamp designers give live demonstrations.

The Netherlands

The **PostNL** plan to close 300 mail facilities as part of a business restructure has been approved by the Enterprise Chamber of the Court of Amsterdam. The latter rejected a lawsuit from the labour union seeking to block the planned reorganisation.

On a separate note, PostNL announced that it had posted a profit of 1.77 billion EUR in the second quarter of 2011 after demerging from TNT Express in May.

New Zealand

October is a month of change at **New Zealand Post**. The operator will eliminate its International Economy Letter service, increase the maximum parcel size for International Economy Courier items and expand its International A Economy Courier service to 32 countries, adding Thailand, the Philippines, Viet Nam, Croatia, Greece, Hungary and Portugal.

United States

The **United States Postal Service** sustainability report released in July showed a 30 per cent drop in energy consumption and an increase of 133 per cent in alternative fuel use for 2010. Chief Sustainability Officer Thomas Day says reduced energy use saved the Post five million USD.

All texts by Ruby Pratka



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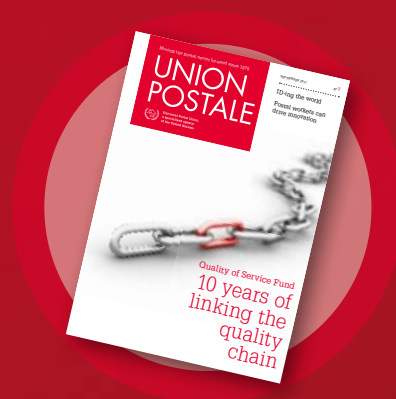
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