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Portfolio Committee on Justice and Constitutional Development: Report on the E-Justice Programme

1. Introduction

The Department of Justice and Constitutional Development aims to uphold and protect the constitution and the rule of law. It is accountable to the public and the state in rendering accessible, fair, speedy and cost-effective administration of Justice, in the interests of a safer and more secure South Africa.

The department has come up with an initiative known as the E-Justice Programme, which is intended to modernise and reform the administration of justice in this country.

The e-Justice Programme is a multi-year programme, established in January 2000 to align current projects into a focussed programme. Current projects that are being rolled-out are listed below:

Digital Nervous System (DNS), which is intended to provide network connectivity, computer

capability and basic computer skills training to the Department of Justice.

Financial Administration System (FAS), which is intended to integrate the functionality of all the financial systems.

Court Process Project (CPP), the purpose of which is to pilot the re-engineering of the way in which our courts function by providing them with the necessary tools to deal with the caseloads and management of courts in a more effective manner.

2. Overview of the E-Justice Programme

This report on the E-Justice Programme covers 3 result areas, viz Digital Nervous System (DNS), Financial Administration System (FAS) and Court processes Project (CPP).

2.1 The E-Justice Programme aims:

Make the administration of Justice speedy and cost-effective in the interests of a safer and more secure South Africa.

Promoting accessibility to and transparency in the justice process.

Facilitating accountability to the public and state.

Promoting an integrated justice system and fully utilising the best technology available as a strategic enabler.

2.2 Donor Funding

The E-Justice programme cannot succeed in its objectives without donor support of its various projects. It depends on donor funding to survive.

E-JUSTICE PROGRAMME	AMOUNT RECEIVED DUTCH DONOR	AMOUNT RECEIVED EU DONOR	TOTAL
ISM	17,020,000.00	0.00	17,020,000.00
HR	0.00	16,000,000.00	16,000,000.00
DNS PROJECT	91,152,950.00	49,082,500.00	140,235,450.00
FAS PROJECT	1,000,000.00	0.00	1,000,000.00
CPP PROJECT	8,000,000.00	0.00	8,000,000.00
	117,172,950.00	65,082,500.00	182,255,450.00

3. Summary reports on projects

3.1 CPP

3.1.1 Background

The Court Process Pilot Project commenced in August 2000 with a view to developing a system to automate the courts' processes and to pilot this in Durban and Johannesburg.

3.1.2 Progress

The Criminal sub-system was piloted in Durban from September 2001 until the technical system was signed off in May 2002. Since then many changes have been made to improve the usability and conform to user change requests. Some challenges still exist with regards to upgrading the computer user competency (literacy), ICT infrastructure and system performance.

The Civil sub-system was subjected to beta testing at the end of 2002. The test confirmed that it is definitely feasible to automate the Civil process, though it is considerably more complex and, in the case of large cases, very much more subject to exceptions. Interaction between attorneys, court and sheriff was demonstrated but the system was let down primarily by the capabilities of the Internet in South Africa at present. Furthermore, whilst the Criminal sub-system can be used in the main without rule and legislation changes, this is not true of the Civil sub-system, where such changes will have to be made before the sub-system can be used in practice. Most of the changes have been defined, but the process has been hampered by the absence of a Rules Board and the long process to effect the required changes. It is axiomatic that most complex human endeavours can no longer succeed without the assistance of computerisation. Unfortunately the very nature of software makes it imperative that it is used - there is just so much that can be achieved in a lab. Software will succeed or fail in use and not in the lab. Also, since "*software entities are more complex for their size than perhaps any other human construct ... digital computers are themselves more complex than most things people build. They have very large numbers of states ... software systems have orders-of-magnitude more states than computers do.*" (Frederick Brooks)

There is by now very little doubt that the use of computers in supporting the judicial process can revolutionise the criminal and civil processes. By now, both of these subsystems have exceeded what has been achieved anywhere else in the world, but the "techies" have now done pretty much what they can and it now requires the political will and organisational discipline to reap the rich harvests that are possible.

3.2 FAS

3.2.1 Status and Progress:

Within the FAS Systems, there are three projects, namely:

Justice Deposit Account System (JDAS),

Development of this system began as a Y2K initiative whereby the Department embarked on an exercise of making it's then "Danie" System Y2K compliant. This culminated in JDAS ver.1. This version of JDAS did not include the maintenance module which was performed via the system known as the "Sharon" system.

A decision was then taken by the Department to include the maintenance module as part of the JDAS system and to further enhance the original JDAS version (i.e. ver. 1)

This process culminated in the JDAS version 2.2.1 which is currently being piloted both in Khayalitsha and Germiston Magistrates Courts.

We have reached the end of the development phase of this project and are now engaging the user with the view of obtaining user/pilot sign off. We intend obtaining the stated sign-off within 30 days.

Once sign-off has been achieved, we intend to roll-out the system to 18 Magistrate's sites within this financial year.

3.2.1.2 Masters Office System (MOS) and

The development of this system was motivated by the need to modernise the Department, correctly account for Trust and Public Funds and to eradicate fraud and corruption within the Guardian Fund.

The Department has managed to develop a system that can correctly track funds paid to the Masters' Office on behalf of beneficiaries and can provide the necessary audit trails.

The system has been tested in a LAB environment using data from the Pretoria site. This system is currently fully developed with bug fixes being the main order of the day. We envisage obtaining total system completion by i3 June 2003, where-after the system will be piloted in Bloemfontein.

3.2.1.3 State Attorney's Systems (SAS).

This system has been fully developed and has been deployed to all State Attorney's Offices. The Department is currently maintaining the system and performing amendments and enhancements to the system according to the users needs.

Benefits:

To illustrate some of the benefits that the above stated systems will have on the public that we serve.

Reduced times spent in queues. How will this be achieved?

Users will be bale to make telephone enquiries;

Their records can be more quickly accessed;

There are no more physical files required to check up Admin. details;

Files can be more speedily processed and payouts can be effected more quicker;

Access to a beneficiaries data can now be given to more than official simultaneously;

There's a significant reduction in human error during calculations, especially in the calculation of amounts required for a Suspended Sentence hearing;
 The risk of files getting lost or being misplaced is minimized/ reduced
 The service that is then rendered to the client is more efficient and effective and
 There is no dependency on other officials, as all authorized officials have the necessary access to the system and to the beneficiary details.
 DNS

3.3.1 Achievements

Item:	Installed:	Target:
Number of Data Points	11 937	20 000
Number of Electrical Power points	23 896	38 000
Number of Server Environmental Enclosures	59	84
Number of Servers	293	373
Number of Desktops	3163	11 338
Number of Printers	844	2 760
Training: Phase I	2 642	10 000
Training: Phase II	2 376	10 000

Overview: The DNS has now reached the halfway mark. Due to practical difficulties in migrating existing computer users to the new Windows 2000 environment, the original completion date of October 2003 has been extended to May 2004.

Current situation: The DNS programme has temporarily been slowed down to allow for the following:

- More extensive assessments of the user's software requirements that will ensure fewer problems at the time of migration
- To set up User Communication Forums that will smooth the way for a more coordinated deployment programme
- To get the PC Refurbishment programme off the ground that will save approximately R 20 million on the cost of PCs
- The finalisation of the wireless network solution for approximately 60 smaller site that has only recently become available from suppliers
- The finalisation of the Small Site design specifications that will ensure that approximately 57 sites, that were previously excluded from the DNS programme, will now be given computers

3.3.2 The way forward

The DNS programme is now on a better footing. A comprehensive deployment schedule will be signed off by the ISM on 7 July 2003 which will provide more predictability and stability in

planning the key activities. Through the establishment of User Communication Forums, users will enjoy more say in the timeframes and methods of deployment. The service definitions and service level agreements with the supplier have been firmed up and will provide better cost control.

3.3.3 Impact if Funding is no Longer Available

Although there have been numerous practical difficulties, the DNS programme has brought electronic communication capability to almost half the officials in the Department. With the focus now on the medium to smaller sized offices, many more users will shortly enjoy the benefits of having e-mail, data processing and research capabilities. Depriving these offices of this facility will hold back development of the Justice system.