

URA unveils communication network to ease tax payments

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Paying taxes to the Ugandan treasury is set to become more convenient for taxpayers following the adoption of URANET by Uganda Revenue Authority the body that collects billions of shillings from taxpayers.

Uganda Revenue Authority Network (URANET) is a new high-speed communications network connecting 60 tax collection stations across the country with voice and data capability. "This network will simplify tax procedures and minimize operational costs incurred by taxpayers as they fulfil their tax obligations," said a statement from URA on January 16.

The network is a product of URA's 2004 information and communication technology (ICT) strategy that was aimed at re-engineering systems and automating the process of International Trade and Domestic tax collections for improved service delivery and increase performance.

"URANET was tried and tested between July 18th and 30th November 2007 and is now in use," confirmed the statement. It added that the implementation of the network was made possible by financial support from Department for International Development (DFID) and technical assistance from Uganda Telecom Limited among its other development partners.

The network will bring number of benefits to customers including instant service delivery where one can instantly and accurately determine taxes levied on different goods and services, saving the taxpayer from travelling long distances to access services from the Kampala city branch and lower communication costs through free voice calls to URA staff at any tax station.

Through URA, the treasury collected UGX2,615bn in the financial year (FY) 2006/7 and was projected to amass UGX3,190bn during this FY, by Finance minister Dr Ezra Suruma. Telecommunication giant MTN Uganda topped tax contributions to the body remitting UGX173.9bn to URA in last year's financial year, according to statistics from the URA issued in September 2007.

The top ten of the best 1000 taxpayers remitted over UGX753bn which was 28.6 per cent of the total revenue. These include, MTN, Shell, Uganda Breweries, Nile Breweries, Total Uganda, Tororo cement, Century Bottling Company (Coke), and thermal electricity generators Aggreko International.

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