

Advisory Committee on Enforcement

Seventeenth Session
Geneva, February 4 to 6, 2025

ACTIVITIES UNDERTAKEN BY UGANDA IN THE FIELD OF INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY EDUCATION TO PROMOTE RESPECT FOR INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY AND EFFECTIVE INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY ENFORCEMENT

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ABSTRACT

The Uganda Registration Services Bureau (URSB), as the National Intellectual Property Office, plays a pivotal role in administering and enforcing intellectual property (IP) laws. Guided by the National IP Policy of Uganda (2019), the URSB has prioritized IP education to foster respect for IP and ensure effective enforcement. These efforts are implemented in collaboration with national and international partners, focusing on awareness, capacity-building, and stakeholder engagement.

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The URSB is a semi-autonomous government agency responsible for registration of intellectual property rights (IPRs) in the Republic of Uganda. It also provides other registration services, such as civil and business registration. Recognizing the essential role of IP as a driver of sustainable development, the Ministry of Justice and Constitutional Affairs (MoJCA) directed the URSB in its capacity as the National IP Office, to develop a National IP Policy that

* The views expressed in this document are those of the author and not necessarily those of the Secretariat or of the Member States of WIPO.

establishes IP as a driver of socioeconomic development. The Government of Uganda also partnered with WIPO to develop the National IP Policy.¹

2. Among other policy goals, the National IP Policy aims to enhance utilization of the IP system by providing incentives for its utilization, through a conducive environment for generation, protection, commercialization and enforcement of IP assets. It also aims to achieve a critical mass of IP awareness, appreciation and active participation among various actors and stakeholders and to ensure effective IP rights enforcement by strengthening linkages and coordination between designated IP enforcement institutions, agencies and authorities, and by developing and implementing effective IP enforcement training and related capacity-building programs for enforcement officials, the judiciary and the general public.

3. Guided by this policy, the URSB has undertaken initiatives on IP awareness, education and capacity-building, as set out below.

II. IP EDUCATION, TRAINING AND CAPACITY-BUILDING INITIATIVES

A. CAPACITY-BUILDING FOR ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES

4. The URSB has undertaken significant initiatives to enhance the capacity of enforcement agencies:

- a) **Training for Police Officers:** The URSB collaborates with the Uganda Police Training School to train officials from the Criminal Investigations Department (CID) on IP laws and enforcement procedures.
- b) **Capacity-building for State Prosecutors:** In collaboration with the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions (ODPP), the URSB has trained more than 30 prosecutors to handle IP-related cases effectively.
- c) **Judicial Training:** The URSB has entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the WIPO Judicial Institute to focus on training judicial officers on IP adjudication. This initiative will be complemented by engagement with the Standards, Utilities, and Wildlife Chief Magistrate Court to expedite IP-related cases.

B. PUBLIC AWARENESS AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH

5. The URSB has implemented various initiatives to engage with the public and raise awareness about IP rights:

- a) **Copyright Law Amendment Consultations:** As part of the process for the amendment of the 2006 Copyright and Neighboring Rights Act, the URSB conducted nationwide consultations to inform over 1,200 stakeholders about the importance of copyright as well as the importance of enforcement mechanisms.
- b) **Public Notices and Media Campaigns:** In collaboration with Collective Management Organizations (CMOs), the Uganda Police Force disseminated cautionary notices and enforcement updates through newspapers with a daily readership of 50,000, and radio, television, and social media platforms.

¹ <https://ursb.go.ug/storage/publications/downloads/national-ip-policy-2019-uganda-1644498620.pdf>

- c) **National IP Week and World IP Day:** These events involve targeted awareness campaigns aimed at small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), universities and research institutions, resulting in increased awareness and support for IP policy development.

C. SPECIALIZED TRAINING AND SECTOR-SPECIFIC INITIATIVES

6. To address the diverse needs of stakeholders and the public, the URSB has tailored IP education initiatives for specific sectors:

- a) **WIPO-URSB Roving Seminars:** The URSB has hosted roving seminars at universities and research institutions in collaboration with WIPO, to promote respect for IP among youth and academics.
- b) **Technology and Innovation Support Centers (TISCs):** The URSB established TISCs in 35 institutions and two secondary schools, to integrate IP education into innovation programs.
- c) **Sector-Specific Workshops:** The URSB undertakes capacity-building initiatives for various sector-specific stakeholders. Recent initiatives include educating agro-dealers and farmer cooperatives on the IP value chain and training herbalists to protect traditional knowledge.
- d) **Women's empowerment training through women's meetings such as the Women in IP Conference:** The URSB organizes workshops and meetings for women entrepreneurs. The most notable recent event is the Women in IP conference held in collaboration with the African Regional Intellectual Property Organization (ARIPO), which brought female judicial officers, innovators, and entrepreneurs together to promote gender inclusivity in the IP ecosystem. This event highlighted success stories and encouraged women to utilize IP systems effectively in order to enforce their IP rights.
- e) **Academic Engagement and Anti-Piracy Efforts:** The URSB has leverage on collaborations with the Ministry of Education and Sports and the Uganda Reproduction Rights Organization (URRO) to target piracy in academic materials, emphasizing the role of IP in supporting education and innovation.

D. ENFORCEMENT-DRIVEN AWARENESS

7. The URSB leverages enforcement operations to educate the public, such as **Operation USALAMA** conducted with the Uganda Revenue Authority and International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL). The initiative targeted counterfeit goods and raised awareness about IP compliance.

III. CHALLENGES IN IP EDUCATION AND ENFORCEMENT

8. Despite these strides, certain challenges persist, including:

- a) Limited resources for nationwide awareness-raising and training;
- b) Low appreciation and understanding of IP rights among stakeholders;

- c) Inadequate penalties for IP infringement, reducing deterrence;
- d) Technological constraints in tracking and enforcing IP rights.

IV. FUTURE FOCUS AREAS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

9. To address these challenges, the URSB plans to undertake the following actions:
- a) Leveraging technology: incorporating artificial intelligence and digital tools to track IP infringements, especially in digital spaces;
 - b) Strengthening legal frameworks: reforming laws to include stronger penalties for IP violations;
 - c) Enhancing capacity-building: expanding training for enforcement actors and integrating IP education into more institutions;
 - d) Increasing collaboration: partnering with development partners to facilitate cross-border enforcement and resource sharing.

V. CONCLUSION

10. Interventions by Uganda in IP education reflect a commitment to fostering respect for IP and strengthening IP enforcement. Continued support from international partners and increased domestic funding will be essential in addressing challenges and scaling these efforts. The URSB remains dedicated to building an IP-conscious society, driving innovation and economic growth.

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