

Justice Ssemogerere undertakes working visit to Kisoro Courts to boost access to justice

The Resident Judge of the Kabale High Court Circuit, Justice Karoli Lwanga Ssemogerere, conducted a working visit to Kisoro District as part of the Judiciary's ongoing efforts to enhance justice delivery, assess court operations, and engage with key stakeholders on improving access to justice in the region.

The Judge was accompanied by the Court's Assistant Registrar, HW Kenneth Tumwebaze.

During the visit, Justice Ssemogerere held a series of meetings with the Chief Magistrate of Kisoro, Judicial Officers, and representatives from the Office of



the Director of Public Prosecutions (ODPP), Uganda Police Force, and Kisoro District Local Government. Among the government officials in attendance were the LCV Chairperson, the Resident District Commissioner, and the Chief Administrative Officer. The delegation also toured the border areas with Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of Congo to understand the cross-border legal challenges

impacting the jurisdiction.

The Resident Judge visited three major court stations in the district. At Kisoro Chief Magistrate's Court, which currently manages more than 300 active cases, he reviewed operations and interacted with staff. He proceeded to Kyanika Magistrate Grade One Court, where 65 civil cases are currently being handled, and later visited Bunagana Magistrate Grade One Court, which has 30 criminal and 23 civil matters in its docket.

Deliberations during the visit focused on improving access to justice in underserved communities. Justice Ssemogerere emphasized the need to

establish new courts in remote areas such as Rubugiri and Nsanza to reduce case backlog and bring services closer to the people. He also discussed the importance of broadening stakeholder engagement, introducing systems for categorizing cases to expedite hearings, and promoting Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) to ease the burden on courts. Additionally, he stressed the need for strict observance of pecuniary jurisdiction to ensure cases are filed appropriately.

Stakeholders raised several pressing challenges. These included logistical difficulties in transporting and remanding juvenile offenders, the increasing influence of “bush lawyers” offering unauthorized legal advice, and ambiguities in the roles of Local Council leaders that have complicated enforcement of court orders. Concerns were also raised about the growing trend of suspects colluding with law enforcement to skip trial dates, parties settling matters outside court without notification, and inflated valuations of suit properties that hinder fair adjudication.

Justice Ssemogerere responded by committing to a number of interventions. He pledged to explore sustainable transport arrangements for juveniles to designated remand homes and promised that a water reserve tank would be installed at Kyanika Court to resolve ongoing utility challenges. He assured stakeholders that the Judiciary would fast-track the gazettment and operationalization of proposed courts in Rubugiri and Nsanza. Justice Karoli also recommended convening a Kisoro-specific stakeholder forum to improve coordination among justice actors and vowed to advocate for increased funding to strengthen infrastructure and personnel in the justice sector.