



**THE JUDICIARY OF UGANDA**

**Presentation of the Performance of the High Court , at the 26<sup>th</sup>  
Annual Judges Conference**

**Presented by**

**The Hon. The Principal Judge**

# FORMAT OF THE PRESENTATION

- 1) **Mandate of the High Court**
- 2) **Composition of the High Court**
- 3) **Overall Performance of the High Court ( Divisions and Circuits ) for the last three(3) years**
- 4) **Disposal Rates and Clearance Rates of the High Court ( Divisions and Circuits ) for the last three(3) years**
- 5) **Performance of the High Court ( Divisions and Circuits ) in cases of a Civil Nature**
- 6) **Performance of the High Court ( Divisions and Circuits ) in cases of a Criminal Nature**



# FORMAT OF THE PRESENTATION-cont'd

- 7) Performance of the High Court Divisions in the Year 2024
- 8) Overall Performance of the High Court Circuits in the Year 2024
- 9) Emerging Issues in the year 2024
- 10) What to look out for in the year 2025



## **MANDATE OF THE HIGH COURT**

- a) **The High Court is created under Articles 138 - 140 of the Constitution of Uganda.**
- b) **It is the third Court of Record in the order of hierarchy and has unlimited original and appellate jurisdiction.**
- c) **Appeals from Chief Magistrates Courts, Magistrate Grade I Courts and some Administrative Tribunals go to the High Court**
- d) **The Court also has supervisory powers over Magistrates' courts and Local Council Courts through appeal and revisionary jurisdiction.**



## COMPOSITION OF THE HIGH COURT

The High Court has been decentralized into Divisions and Circuits

- a) There are seven Divisions namely: (1)Civil , (2)Commercial, (3)Family , (4)Land , (5)Anti-Corruption , (6)International Crimes and (7)Criminal
  
- b) The Judiciary currently has 38 designated High Court circuits but only 24 operational High Court Circuits, that is; (1) Arua, (2) Bushenyi , (3) Fort portal, ( 4)Gulu , (5)Hoima , ( 6)Iganga, (7) Jinja, (8) Kabale , (9) Kasese, (10)Kiboga , (11) Kitgum, (12) Lira, (13)Luwero, (14)Masaka , (15) Masindi , (16) Mbale , (17)Mbarara, (18)Moroto , (19) Mpigi ,(20)Mubende ,(21) Mukono,( 22) Rukungiri, (23) Soroti and ( 24) Tororo
  
- c) None operational Circuits are 14 to wit; Apac, Bugiri, Dokolo, Entebbe, Ibanda, Kumi, Lugazi, Moyo, Nebbi, Ntungamo, Pallisa, Patongo, Rakai and Wakiso

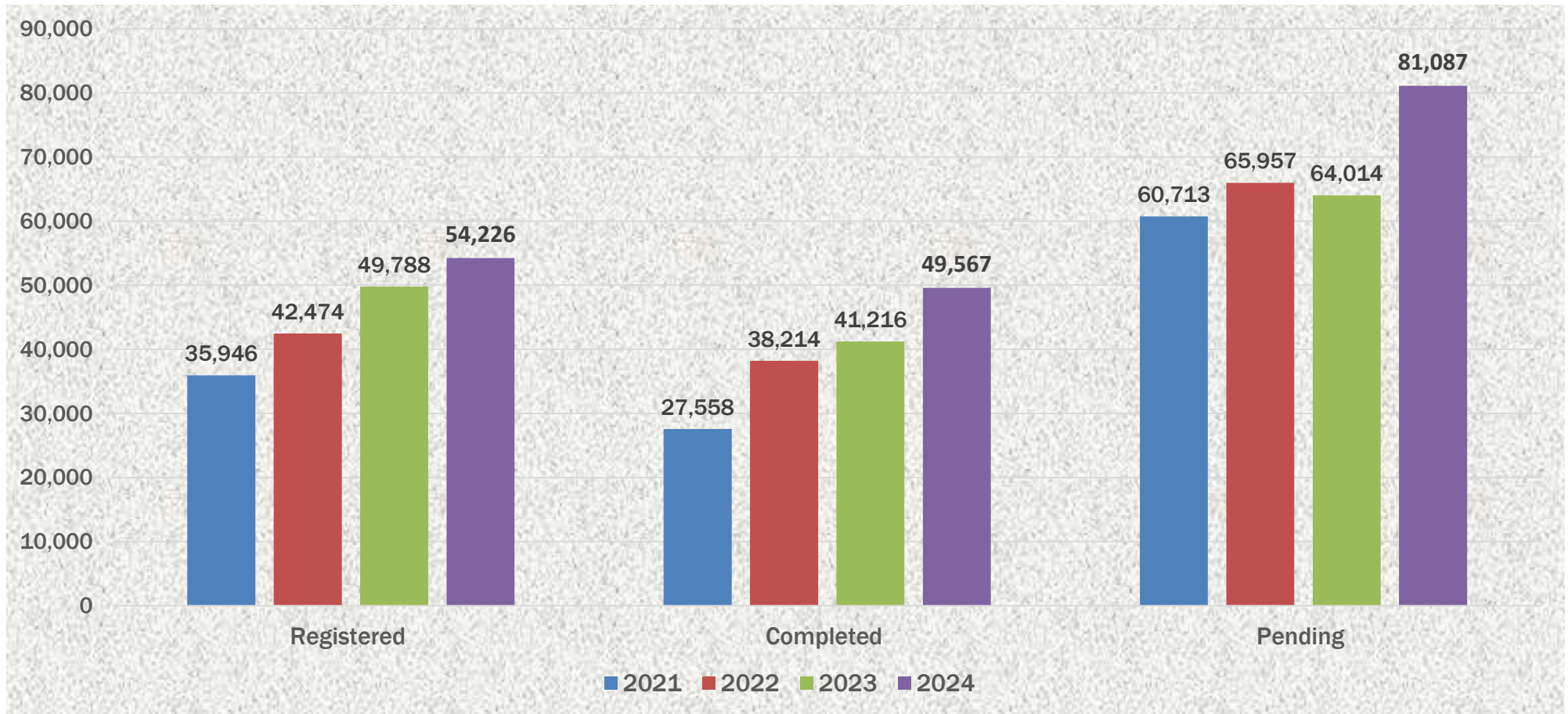


## **OVERALL PERFORMANCE OF THE HIGH COURT ( DIVISIONS AND CIRCUITS) FOR THE LAST FOUR (4) YEARS**

- a) The High Court has recorded tremendous growth in case disposal and case registration over the last Four (4) calendar years - 2021, 2022, 2023 and 2024.
- b) The improvement in case disposal can be attributed to the recruitment and strategic deployment of new Judges and Registrars; increased automation of court processes; and operationalization of new High Court Circuits.
- c) In the Year 2024, a total of 49,567 cases were completed, 54,226 cases were registered and the year 2024 closed with 81,087 cases.



# OVERALL PERFORMANCE OF THE HIGH COURT ( DIVISIONS AND CIRCUITS )FOR THE LAST FOUR (4) YEARS –Cont'd

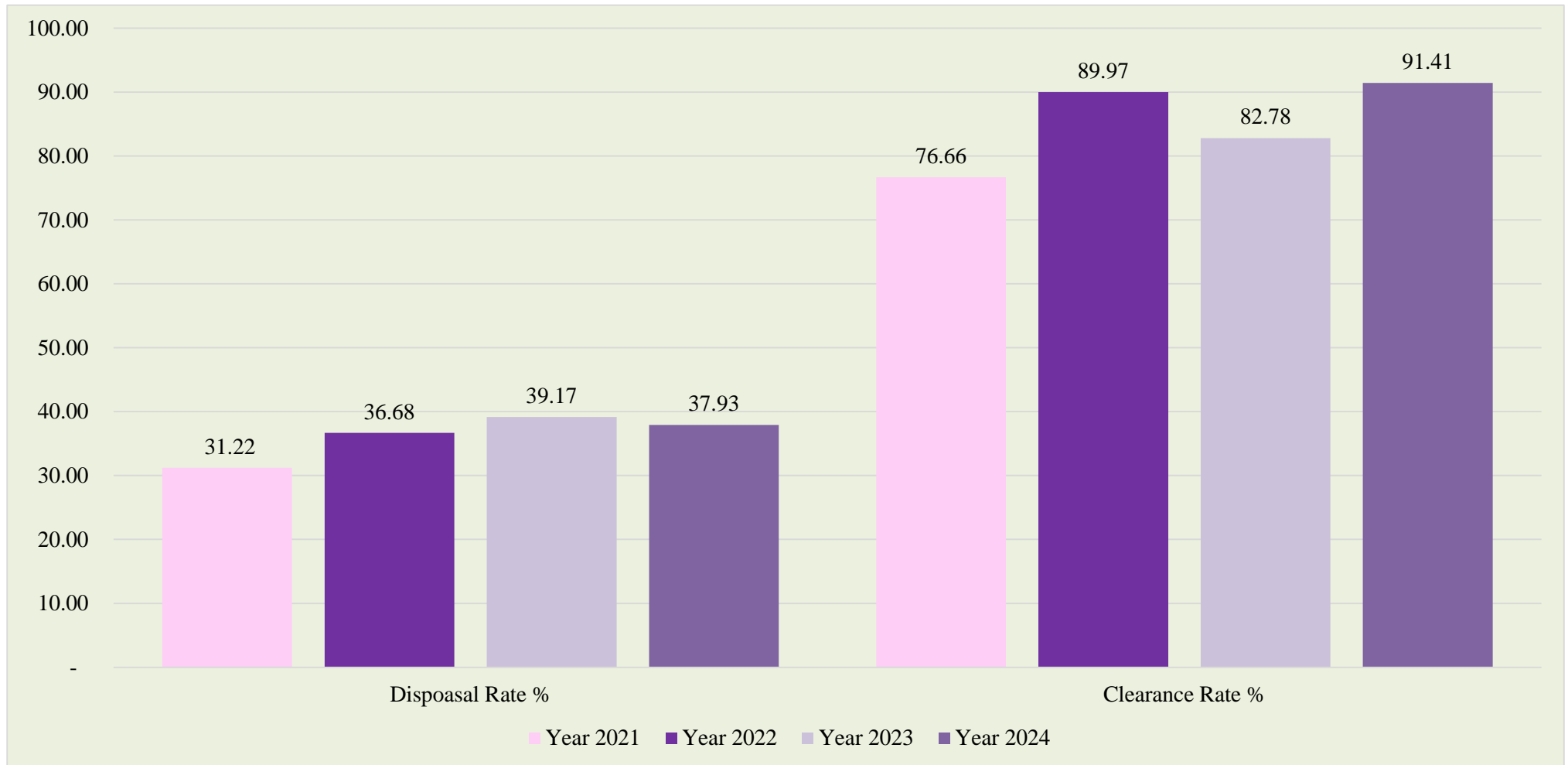


## **DISPOSAL RATES AND CLEARANCE RATES OF THE HIGH COURT ( DIVISIONS AND CIRCUITS) FOR THE LAST FOUR (4) YEARS –cont'd**

- a) The High Court recorded a decline in disposal rate in the Year 2024(37.93%) compared to the Year 2023(39.17%).
- b) This came against the backdrop of a general improvement in the disposal rates over the last four(4) years.
- a) There was overall improvement in clearance rates over the period under review closing at a 4-year high of 91.41% .



# DISPOSAL RATES AND CLEARANCE RATES OF THE HIGH COURT ( DIVISIONS AND CIRCUITS )FOR THE LAST FOUR (4) YEARS-cont'd



## PERFORMANCE OF THE HIGH COURT ( DIVISIONS AND CIRCUITS) IN CASES OF A CIVIL NATURE

- a) The High Court recorded tremendous growth in the disposal and registration of cases that are Civil in Nature ( Civil, Commercial, Family and Land ) over the last Four (4) calendar years-2021, 2022, 2023 and 2024.
- b) 4-year highs of **38,362** cases completed and **41,463** cases registered in the year 2024.
- c) The High Court recorded a 4-year High of **62,716** pending cases in the Year 2024.



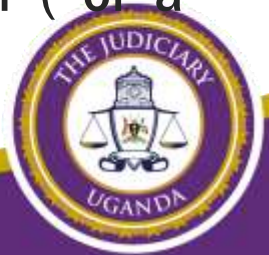
## PERFORMANCE OF THE HIGH COURT ( DIVISIONS AND CIRCUITS) IN CASES OF A CIVIL NATURE –cont'd

No.	Case Type	Registered cases				Completed cases				Pending cases			
		Year 2021	Year 2022	Year 2023	Year 2024	Year 2021	Year 2022	Year 2023	Year 2024	Year 2021	Year 2022	Year 2023	Year 2024
	<b>Civil Nature</b>												
1	Civil	10,851	9,996	8,955	10,304	8,346	10,010	7,515	11,423	17,984	16,513	15,213	17,774
2	Commercial	4,371	4,239	7,315	6,491	2,722	3,631	5,336	5,943	6,612	7,120	5,885	8,953
3	Family	4,297	7,578	7,602	9,968	4,045	6,689	7,488	8,656	6,820	8,893	8,256	9,429
4	Land	9,957	11,370	15,405	14,700	7,651	9,484	13,025	12,340	19,035	19,115	19,579	26,560
	<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>29,476</b>	<b>33,183</b>	<b>39,277</b>	<b>41,463</b>	<b>22,764</b>	<b>29,814</b>	<b>33,364</b>	<b>38,362</b>	<b>50,451</b>	<b>51,641</b>	<b>48,933</b>	<b>62,716</b>



## **PERFORMANCE OF THE HIGH COURT ( DIVISIONS AND CIRCUITS) IN CASES OF A CRIMINAL NATURE**

- a) The High Court has recorded tremendous increase in case registration of cases that are Criminal in Nature ( Anti-Corruption , Criminal and International Crimes) over the last Four (4) calendar years-2021,2022, 2023 and 2024.
- b) There was a 3,353-cases increase in cases of a Criminal Nature disposed of in the year 2024 as compared to the year 2023.
- c) This increase arose from a escalation in the number of Criminal and Anti-Corruption Cases completed.
- a) The High Court recorded a 4-year high of 11,205 cases disposed of ( of a Criminal Nature in the year 2024.



## PERFORMANCE OF THE HIGH COURT ( DIVISIONS AND CIRCUITS) IN CASES OF A CRIMINAL NATURE –cont'd

S/no	Case Type	Registered cases				Completed cases				Pending cases			
		Year 2021	Year 2022	Year 2023	Year 2024	Year 2021	Year 2022	Year 2023	Year 2024	Year 2021	Year 2022	Year 2023	Year 2024
1	Anti-Corruption	183	241	298	307	196	280	214	366	235	197	231	281
2	Criminal	6,258	8,916	10,137	12,424	4,584	8,062	7,546	10,790	9,958	13,944	14,784	18,029
3	International Crimes	29	134	76	32	14	58	92	49	69	175	66	61
	<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>6,470</b>	<b>9,291</b>	<b>10,511</b>	<b>12,763</b>	<b>4,794</b>	<b>8,400</b>	<b>7,852</b>	<b>11,205</b>	<b>10,262</b>	<b>14,316</b>	<b>15,081</b>	<b>18,371</b>

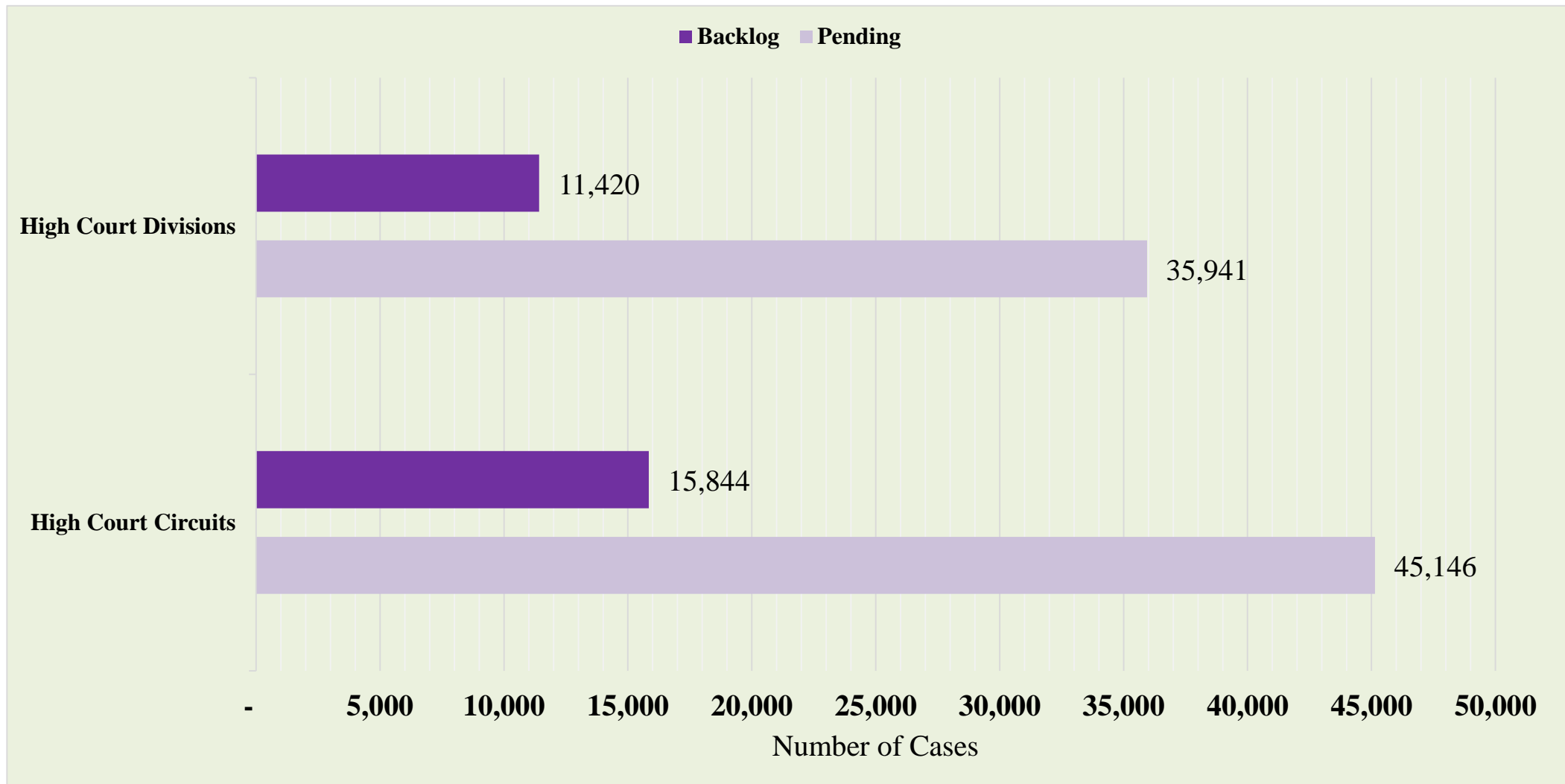


## **PENDING AND BACKLOG STATUS AS AT DECEMBER 2024**

- a) The High Court Divisions recorded **11,420** backlog cases out of **35,941** pending cases (**31.77 %**) as at **31st December 2024..**
- b) On the other hand , the High Court Circuits recorded **15,844** backlog cases out of **45.146** pending cases(**35.10 %**) as of the same date.
- c) Overall , the High Court posted a total of **27,264** backlog cases out of **81,087** pending cases (**33.62%**) as of the aforementioned date.
- d) This resulted into a **5-percentage** point reduction from the **38.99%** percentage backlog posted by the High Court, overall, as of **31<sup>st</sup> December 2023**.



# PENDING AND BACKLOG STATUS AS AT DECEMBER 2024 -cont'd



# PERFORMANCE OF THE HIGH COURT DIVISIONS FOR THE YEAR 2024

- a. High Court Divisions registered 24,124 cases, disposed of 19,887 cases closing with a pending of 34,704 cases in the period under review.
- b. The Commercial Division recorded the highest disposal (5,824 cases) while Family Division posted the highest registration (6,704 cases ) in the year 2024.
- c. The performance of the Commercial Division is crucial in stimulating economic development by ensuring timely resolution of business disputes, enhancing investor confidence, and promoting a stable commercial environment.



# PERFORMANCE OF THE HIGH COURT DIVISIONS FOR THE YEAR 2024

d. Despite having a high caseload, the Land Division successfully resolved 4,454 cases.

e . This points to the vital role it played in securing land tenure, reducing disputes, and fostering investment in real estate, agriculture, and infrastructure development which are key drivers of economic growth.

f. The Family Division disposed of 5,602 cases contributing to social stability by settling matters related to inheritance, custody, and family welfare.



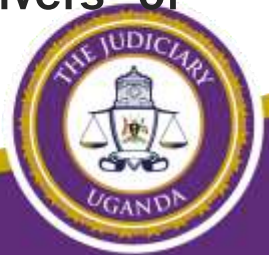
## PERFORMANCE OF THE HIGH COURT DIVISIONS FOR THE YEAR 2024 -cont'd

SN	High Court Division	Brought Forward	Registered	Completed	Pending
1	Commercial	7,635	6,392	5,824	8,203
2	Civil	4,503	3,000	2,418	5,085
3	Criminal	2,091	1,669	1,174	2,586
4	Anti-Corruption	340	307	366	281
5	Land	10,744	6,020	4,454	12,310
6	Family	5,076	6704	5,602	6178
7	International Crimes	78	32	49	61
	Total	30,467	24,124	19,887	34,704



# OVERALL PERFORMANCE OF THE HIGH COURT CIRCUITS FOR THE YEAR 2024

- a. High Court Circuits registered 30,102 cases, disposed of 29,680 cases and closed with 46,383 pending cases in the period under review.
- b. The criminal cases type recorded the highest completion, disposing of 9616 cases followed by the Civil (9,005) and Land (7,886).
- c. The disposal of criminal cases enhances public safety and legal certainty, fostering a stable environment for economic activities.
- d. Efficient handling of civil and land disputes strengthens contract enforcement, property rights, and investment security, all of which are critical drivers of economic growth and business confidence.



## OVERALL PERFORMANCE OF THE HIGH COURT CIRCUITS FOR THE YEAR 2024-cont'd

SN	Case Type	Brought Forward	Registered	Completed	Pending
1	Civil	14,390	7,304	9,005	12,689
2	Commercial	770	99	119	750
3	Family	3,041	3,264	3,054	3,251
4	Land	13,304	8,680	7,886	14,250
5	Criminal	14,304	10,755	9,616	15,443
	Total	45,961	30,102	29,680	46,383



# REASONS FOR UNDER PERFORMANCE

- ❖ Untimely release of funds.
- ❖ Heavy workloads.
- ❖ Lack of enough judicial officers.
- ❖ Absenteeism, late coming, leaving early.
- ❖ Delay to render decisions after hearing cases.
- ❖ Absence of sufficient Prosecutors in a number of Courts.
- ❖ Lawyers seeking for unnecessary adjournments.
- ❖ Lack of or inadequate space especially where Judges have to wait for court halls.
- ❖ Power shortages.
- ❖ Etc.



## EMERGING ISSUES DURING THE YEAR 2024

- 1) In August 2024, former Lord's Resistance Army commander Thomas Kwoyelo was convicted on 44 counts, marking a significant milestone in Uganda's judicial history.
- 2) The High Court faced challenges with high caseloads, which affected its performance. Efforts to manage and reduce these backlogs are ongoing.
- 3) The Judiciary made strides in adopting technological solutions to enhance case management and overall efficiency.
- 4) The Judiciary engaged in law reforms which impacted on High Court's performance to improve justice delivery.



## Cont...

5. Juvenile Sessions for handling all cases involving juveniles were conducted in November and December 2024.

6. Special SGBV sessions conducted in selected Courts

7. High Court Quarterly Performance review meetings conducted each quarter;

Assisted in the following

- evaluating performance quarterly.
- Cleaning of data.
- Sharing of best practices.
- Compiling a matrix of issues affecting performance of Courts.



# HIGH COURT QUARTERLY PERFORMANCE REVIEW MEETINGS

- Attended by Heads and Deputy Heads of Divisions and Circuits to review performance of the High Court.
- Chaired by DCJ/Chairperson, Case Management Committee of the Judiciary

## **Some key resolutions have been made that have influenced planning to wit;**

- Support and roll out of innovations such as plea bargaining, mediation, small claims, and adoption of daily hearing of criminal cases.
- Best practices such as combining interlocutory applications with main suits to reduce proliferation of cases in the system.
- Change of attitude to strengthen the supervisory role of Judges.
- Each Division/Circuit/Court to prepare properly costed case clearance plans with defined time schedules. This shall be integrated into a Judiciary wide case clearance plan for each year.
- Divisions/Circuits/Courts should hold regular internal case management meetings, peer reviews, agreeing targets and timely progress reporting monthly, cleaning up and ensuring ownership of data in CASS.



## Cont...

- Strengthen coordination in the chain of justice and adopt standards approved under the chain linked initiatives.
- Support the implementation of a robust ADR framework including reform of the existing mediation practice and placements.
- ICT, equipment and tools must be provided to facilitate Judicial officers to dispose cases and engage stakeholders e.g. through use of online platforms and opportunities for online hearing of cases and delivery of judgements.
- Develop a tool that will monitor case load and performance of judicial officers at all levels.
- Embrace new rules of procedure to enhance court performance and train members of the bar and bench on new rules and processes.
- Regular training, sensitization and capacity building for Staff of the Judiciary on data management systems and best practices.
- Regular and instantaneous update of data on the systems.
- Ensure criminal session cases resolved through Plea Bargaining are substituted with additional cases to ensure value for money.
- Mode of disposal of cases should be indicated in session reports.
- Need for a martial plan to handle stations that have a high caseload as a way of dealing with backlog.



## Cont...

### General issues arising from the Quarterly Review meetings;

- Underfunding of the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions is affecting prosecution of criminal cases in many courts across the country.
- Shortage of court halls is a cross cutting challenge in many of the Circuits and Divisions.
- Apart from Jinja, all other courts do not have standardized archives.
- The CCAS statistics usually do not tally with the physical files.
- Disappointment at the manner in which support staff are irrationally transferred without first consulting with the affected judges.
- Transfer of clerks to areas where they do not understand and translate the local languages spoken in the area. There is therefore need for re-alignment of transfers of clerks.
- There is a need for improvement on the ECCMIS system speed as part of the general feedback from ECCMIS users.
- ECCMIS system doesn't make provision for Airtel and other service providers to make payments online.



## Cont...

- Need for beefing up security for judges who are increasingly being targeted.
- Harmonious relations with fellow judges should be emphasized as a topic during induction for judges so that internal clashes are avoided.
- The issue of having many Magistrates in one station with only one court hall makes work counter-productive.
- Need for a system that interlinks the judiciary with other government agencies for easy verification of documents.
- Support staff with God fathers who are problematic at some stations.
- Concern that mediators at courts were no longer getting payment.



## WHAT TO LOOK OUT FOR IN THE YEAR 2025

- 1) Improved Case Backlog Management and Clearance Rates.
- 2) Adoption of alternative dispute resolution (ADR) methods in reducing congestion in courts.
- 3) Enhanced Judicial Accountability and Transparency.
- 4) Appointment of more High Court Judges to improve case disposal rates.
- 5) Operationalization of more High Court Circuits.
- 6) Infrastructure expansion projects, such as new court buildings.
- 7) Legal Reforms and Policy Changes.
- 8) Technological Advancements in Judicial Processes.
- 9) Stakeholder Engagement to increase Public Trust in the Judiciary.



## Cont...

**10.** Masterplan for clearance of backlog cases involving sending of three Judges to selected circuit to clear backlog and caseload. In this quarter we are starting with Mbarara, Soroti, Mbale, Jinja/Iganga and Masindi.

**11.** Commencement of Special Courts for SGBV cases in the selected circuits of Gulu, Masaka and Arua at Nebbi.



# COMMON COMPLAINTS TO MY OFFICE BY THE COURT USERS

- Delayed judgments and rulings.
- Allegations of bias.
- Delays to avail copies of judgments/rulings and record of proceedings.
- Rudeness/lack of customer care.
- Allegations of corruption on some judicial officers or their staff.
- uncertainty of hearing dates in some courts.
- Laziness/Late coming/absenteeism



## COMMENDATION

I commend the following Judges for consistently exhibiting hard work in terms of exceptional high disposal rate each quarter in the year 2024;

1. Hon. Lady Justice Naluzze Aisha Batala, Judge, Land Division
2. Hon. Lady Justice Kania Rosette Comfort: Judge, Criminal Division
3. Hon. Lady Justice Rubagumya Tumusiime Patience Emily: Judge, Commercial Division



**THE END**

***THANK YOU***

