

**Vision:** “*A society that upholds administrative justice and access to information.*

**Mission:** *To enforce administrative justice and access to information through complaints resolution and public education for efficient and effective service delivery.*

**AOMA WEBINAR:** **Q&A**

**DATE:3rd June, 2025**

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# **Concerning strategies and effectiveness**

## ***Q1: What are the key elements that make an outreach strategy truly effective in reaching marginalised groups?***

An effective outreach strategy for marginalized groups goes beyond general engagement, adopting a targeted, equitable, and empathetic approach. For Ombudsman Kenya, this means ensuring services truly reach those who need them most but often face significant barriers.

1. **Deep Cultural Understanding & Empathy:**

* **Know Their World:** Understand unique histories, cultures, and past experiences to build trust.
* **Tailor Messaging:** Use relevant language and formats; be trauma-informed.

1. **Proactive & Consistent Engagement:**

* **Go to Them:** Engage where they are; don't expect them to come to you.
* **Remove Barriers:** Address issues like transport or childcare.
* **Be Persistent:** Build trust through ongoing presence, not just one-off events.

1. **Authentic Community Partnerships:**

* **Partner with Trusted Locals:** Collaborate with established leaders and grassroots groups.
* **Mutual Benefit:** Ensure partnerships are truly collaborative and supportive.
* **Empower Voices:** Involve community members in planning and implementation.

1. **Prioritize In-Person, Two-Way Dialogue:**

* **Face-to-Face is Key:** Build trust and rapport directly.
* **Listen Actively & Adapt:** Genuinely incorporate feedback; allow community input to shape plans.
* **Engage Influencers:** Turn trusted community members into project ambassadors.

1. **Focus on Equity & Accessibility:**

* **Equity, Not Just Equality:** Provide tailored support based on specific needs.
* **Accessible Information:** Ensure all communications are in accessible formats and languages.
* **Diverse Methods:** Use a mix of digital and traditional outreach.
* **Transparent & Accountable:** Show how their input is used and follow through.

## ***Q2: How can the impact of outreach campaigns be objectively evaluated? What indicators are used?***

Objectively evaluating the impact of outreach campaigns requires a structured approach with measurable indicators. For an organization like the Ombudsman, this evaluation aims to assess how effectively outreach increases awareness, access to services, and ultimately, public trust and improved administrative justice

Common indicators include:

1. **Reach and engagement metrics:** Number of people reached, event attendance, and community participation levels.
2. **Awareness and knowledge gains:** Measured by surveys or feedback to assess increased understanding of Ombudsman services and rights.
3. **Complaint submissions and resolutions:** Tracking the number and nature of complaints received post-outreach as a proxy for increased access to justice.
4. **Media analytics:** Social media engagement rates, email open rates, and other digital metrics to gauge message resonance.
5. **Data collection and validation:** Employing surveys, interviews, and monitoring tools to collect reliable data and validate tools for accuracy.
6. **Continuous learning and adaptation:** Using evaluation results to refine outreach strategies and improve effectiveness over time.

## ***Q3: What is the difference between traditional awareness-raising and “community engagement”? Is there a recommended preference between the two approaches?***

Difference Between Traditional Awareness-Raising and Community Engagement

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| **Aspect** | **Traditional Awareness-Raising** | **Community Engagement** |
| **Focus** | Dissemination of information to raise awareness | Two-way interaction fostering participation and dialogue |
| **Approach** | One-way communication (e.g., campaigns, media) | Collaborative, involving communities in decision-making |
| **Goal** | Inform people about rights, services, or issues | Empower communities to actively participate and influence outcomes, building shared responsibility |
| **Depth of Interaction** | Limited engagement, often passive reception | Active involvement, trust-building, and relationship development |

**In essence:** Traditional awareness-raising *tells* people, while community engagement *involves* them.

Ombudsman Kenya’s outreach combines awareness-raising with community engagement by conducting mobile outreach, legal aid clinics, and involving local leaders and residents in tailoring services to their needs.

**Recommended preference:** Community engagement is preferred for marginalized groups as it builds trust, addresses specific local challenges, and fosters ownership of justice processes, which is essential for sustainable impact. Awareness-raising alone may not sufficiently empower or reach these groups.

1. **Concerning innovation and partnerships**

## ***Q4: How can digital innovations (AI, social media, educational games) be leveraged to better reach younger audiences?***

Leveraging Digital Innovations to Reach Younger Audiences (Ombudsman Kenya)

**Expanding Social Media Reach:**

Ombudsman Kenya has significantly grown its presence on major social media platforms, with follower increases of **65% on Twitter** and **81.6% on Facebook**. These platforms serve as vital channels for real-time updates, public education, and direct interaction, improving the Commission’s visibility and relevance among younger audiences.

**Digital public complaints system (CMIS):**

The launch of the **Complaints Management Information System (CMIS)** provides an online portal where citizens, including youth, can lodge and track complaints from anywhere. This innovation enhances convenience, transparency, and responsiveness—attributes highly valued by younger, tech-literate populations.

**Educational and interactive digital content:**

While Ombudsman Kenya has not yet rolled out interactive youth-targeted platforms, global models offer inspiration. For instance, **Mexico City’s Virtual Tree House** provides a playful, safe space for children and adolescents to learn about their rights. Similar tools—such as gamified learning platforms or mobile apps—could effectively build civic awareness and trust among Kenyan youth.

**Storytelling and digital advocacy:**

Kenyan youth are active in digital storytelling and online advocacy, using social media to amplify voices and influence public policy. Ombudsman Kenya plans to adopt these approaches—creating **compelling, relatable narratives** and campaigns that resonate with youth and encourage participation in governance and accountability efforts.

## ***Q5: What concrete role do partnerships with civil society organisations play in supporting Ombudsman institutions? Are there sustainable funding or coordination mechanisms in this regard?***

**The Role of Partnerships with Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) in Supporting Ombudsman Kenya**

Strategic partnerships with Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) have been instrumental in advancing the mandate of the Commission on Administrative Justice (Ombudsman Kenya), particularly in enhancing reach, capacity, and impact. Key areas of collaboration include:

1. **Extending Reach and Effectiveness:**  
   CSOs and NGOs play a vital role in connecting Ombudsman Kenya with **marginalized and remote communities**. Their deep understanding of local contexts and community trust enables more effective outreach, particularly where formal government presence is limited.
2. **Joint Advocacy and Awareness Campaigns:**  
   CSOs actively partner with the Commission in **public education campaigns**, helping to raise awareness of administrative justice, citizen rights, and available redress mechanisms. These campaigns expand the Commission’s visibility and enhance public participation.
3. **Capacity Building and Training:**  
   Nearly **40,000 public officers** have been trained through initiatives involving Ombudsman Kenya and its partners. These efforts focus on improving **complaints handling**, **access to information**, and **responsive service delivery**, thereby strengthening institutional accountability.
4. **Sustainable Funding and Technical Support:**  
   International development partners like **GIZ (German Development Cooperation)** have provided essential funding and expertise—most notably supporting the development of the **digital Complaints Management Information System (CMIS)**. Such partnerships ensure the sustainability and modernization of the Commission’s operations.
5. **Coordination and Strategic Engagement:**  
   The Commission promotes **structured collaboration** through regular dialogue sessions, joint forums, and coordination with **county governments**. These mechanisms align efforts and ensure coherent and efficient delivery of services at both national and local levels.
6. **Complementing Government Efforts:**  
   CSOs often act as **first responders** for vulnerable or underserved populations, easing pressure on government systems while building public trust. Their grassroots presence helps bridge the gap between citizens and formal administrative justice mechanisms.
7. **Concerning local contexts**

## ***Q6: To what extent are the good practices presented transferable to African and Arab contexts, where digital and educational gaps can be significant?***

The good practices of Ombudsman Kenya—particularly in areas like citizen complaint handling, transparency, digital platforms for reporting, and public participation—are partially transferable to other African and Arab contexts. However, their effectiveness and adaptability depend on local digital infrastructure, education levels, political will, and cultural context.

Here’s a breakdown of the extent of transferability:

**Transferable Good Practices**

These aspects of Ombudsman Kenya's work can be adapted in many African and Arab contexts, even with digital or educational limitations:

* 1. **Community Outreach and Sensitization:** Kenya’s use of local forums-, radio, and in-person clinics helps bridge digital gaps.

These models are highly adaptable in rural or low-literacy contexts.

* 1. **Decentralized Access:** Kenya has expanded its services beyond Nairobi to the counties—this decentralized model can be mirrored in countries with strong regional governance systems.
  2. **Citizen-Centered Approach:** The focus on citizens’ rights, dignity, and redress aligns with values in many African and Arab cultures, especially where justice is expected to be accessible.
  3. **Multilingual Communication:** Use of local languages in Kenya can be replicated in linguistically diverse contexts across both regions.
  4. **Public Sector Accountability:** Promoting transparency and accountability, particularly through regular reporting and performance monitoring, is increasingly in demand across both regions.

**Partially Transferable or Context-Dependent**

These practices require careful adaptation due to digital and educational disparities:

**1. Digital Complaint Platforms (e.g., Huduma Portal, SMS-based systems):**

**Challenge:** Digital access is still uneven, especially among women and rural populations.

**Solution:** Use hybrid systems (paper-based + digital) and low-tech options like SMS or USSD where internet use is low.

**2. Public Education Campaigns:**

Kenya’s campaigns rely on a certain base level of civic knowledge.

In areas with lower literacy or civic awareness, edutainment, storytelling, and oral traditions may be more effective.

**3. Institutional Independence:**

Ombudsman Kenya operates with relative autonomy; some Arab and African countries may lack such political space.

Transfer depends on political will and institutional reform.

The good practices from Ombudsman Kenya are broadly transferable, but not in a one-size-fits-all manner. Tailoring approaches to digital capacity, civic space, and cultural context is essential for meaningful and inclusive implementation in African and Arab settings.

## ***Q7: What specific recommendations exist for engaging with groups that have completely lost trust in the State, such as certain minorities or migrant populations?***

Some communities in Kenya—such as certain minority groups, migrants, or historically marginalized populations—have **deep-rooted mistrust in state institutions**, including redress mechanisms. For Ombudsman Kenya to effectively engage these groups, a **deliberate, community-led, and trust-building approach** is essential.

1. **Work Through Trusted Community Structures:**

**Partner with community-based organizations (CBOs)**, religious leaders, or informal networks that already have **established credibility** within the group. Using **community ambassadors or peer educators** can open pathways for communication and engagement.

2. **Use Safe, Neutral Spaces for Outreach:**

Hold dialogues and services in non-governmental spaces (e.g., community centers, places of worship) to avoid association with formal state structures, which feel more accessible and less intimidating.

Avoid uniforms, government symbols, or formal titles that may trigger distrust.

3. **Ensure Confidentiality and Protection from Retaliation:**

Communicate clear **guarantees of confidentiality**, especially for irregular migrants or undocumented persons.

Provide **anonymous complaint mechanisms** and reinforce that reporting will not lead to arrest, deportation, or other harm.

**4. Involve Communities in Co-Creation:**

Involve affected groups in **designing programs, services, or complaint systems,** making them partners—not just beneficiaries.

Use participatory tools (e.g., community mapping, storytelling circles) to surface their needs and ideas.

**5. Acknowledge Past Failures and Injustices:**

**Publicly recognize past injustices** or state failures. Silence or denial often reinforces distrust.

**6. Deliver Tangible Results, Quickly:**

Deliver **small, visible wins** early in engagement—such as resolving local service issues, providing legal aid, or restoring access to basic rights.

Visible impact can change perceptions faster than messaging alone.

**7. Use Culturally Relevant Communication:**

All engagement should be **multilingual and culturally tailored**, including use of **vernacular radio, WhatsApp voice messages, community theatre, or storytelling forums**. Avoid bureaucratic or legal language where possible.

**8. Maintain a Long-Term Presence**

Engagement must be **ongoing**, not one-off.

Consistent presence—even without immediate results—builds familiarity and eventual trust.

1. **Concerning the institutional framework and independence**

**Q8: Does strengthening citizen engagement require adapting the legal frameworks defining Ombudsman mandates?**

Yes

**Q9: How can a Mediation institution develop its outreach tools without being perceived as a direct extension of the government, in order to maintain citizens’ trust in its impartiality?** Maintaining citizen trust in the impartiality of a mediation institution, especially in a context like Kenya where government involvement in various sectors is significant, is paramount. If a mediation institution is perceived as a direct extension of the government, its legitimacy and effectiveness will be severely undermined. Here's how Kenya develops its outreach tools while safeguarding its impartiality:

**1. Emphasize Independence in All Communications:**

* **Clear Messaging:** Every piece of outreach material (brochures, websites, social media posts, public service announcements) must prominently and consistently state the institution's independence from the government. Use phrases like "An independent Commission," "impartial and neutral," etc.
* **Explain the "Why":** Beyond just stating independence, explain *why* independence is crucial for mediation – that it ensures fairness, allows for unbiased solutions, and protects confidentiality. This educates the public on the core principles of effective mediation.
* **Show, Don't Just Tell:** The Commission highlights case studies (anonymized, with consent) where the mediation institution has successfully resolved disputes even when one party was a government entity or a powerful individual with government connections. This demonstrates impartiality in action.

**2. Implement Transparent and Accessible Processes:**

* **Publicly Available Information:** Make all information about the mediation process – eligibility criteria, fees (if any), steps involved, mediator qualifications, and ethical guidelines – easily accessible online and in physical offices.
* **Simple Language and Diverse Formats:** Use plain language, avoiding legal jargon, in all outreach materials. Provide information in various local languages and formats (e.g., audio, video, community theatre) to reach diverse populations, including those with limited literacy or access to technology.

**4. Emphasize Mediator Professionalism and Ethics:**

* **Accreditation and Training:** Highlight that mediators are highly trained, accredited professionals who adhere to a strict code of ethics emphasizing neutrality, confidentiality, and voluntary participation. Mention the role of the Mediation Accreditation Committee (MAC) if applicable.

5. **Concerning practical recommendations**  
**Q10:** What are the main recommendations from the document *“Connecting with Communities”* that institutions with limited resources could implement immediately?

Institutions with limited resources can implement several outreach strategies immediately, drawing from the experiences of Ombuds institutions worldwide. The key is to prioritize cost-effective methods that maximize reach and impact, especially by leveraging existing community structures and simple communication tools.

Here are the main recommendations:

* **Implement Simple, Accessible Outreach Methods:**
  + **Complaint Drop Boxes:** Place secure complaint drop boxes in community centers in remote or underserved areas to enable people to submit complaints without traveling to main offices.
  + **Designate Focal Persons:** Appoint dedicated staff (focal persons or desk officers) to connect with specific vulnerable or marginalized groups, especially those with language or cultural barriers. These individuals can listen to complaints, relay concerns, and educate communities about the Ombudsman's work.
  + **Regular, Targeted Visits:** Conduct periodic visits to specific communities or regions where access to the main office is a barrier. These visits can be advertised through local channels and provide an opportunity for one-on-one interactions. Even monthly visits to remote areas can significantly increase engagement.
  + **Utilize Traditional Media and Simple Print Materials:** Distribute information through lectures, brochures, leaflets, newsletters, and magazines. Also consider local community radio stations for broadcasting information if available and affordable.
  + **Joint Advocacy and Awareness Campaigns:** Work with partners on shared advocacy goals, awareness campaigns, and capacity-building initiatives.
* **Prioritize Awareness and Understanding:**
  + **Educate on Rights and Services:** Focus outreach efforts on raising awareness about the Ombudsman's existence, its role, and how citizens can easily file complaints.
  + **Empower the Public:** Educate people about their fundamental rights and guide them through bureaucratic processes to assert those rights.

These methods emphasize being physically present or digitally accessible in communities, utilizing existing networks, and communicating in simple, understandable ways, which are crucial for institutions operating with financial and personnel constraints

**ADVANCE QUESTIONS RAISED**

**Q. I will be glad to share Kenya's experience on OMBUDSMAN MASHINANI – conducting outreach and awareness programs at the grassroots.**

The Office of the Ombudsman in Kenya has targeted outreaches that emphasize proactive engagement through what we call: ‘Ombudsman Mashinani’ which loosely translates to Ombudsman at grassroots levels. We seek to reach citizens from all walks of life, empowering them to assert their rights and bridge the gap between the government and the people.

Through 'Ombudsman Mashinani,' the CAJ aims to:

1. **Demystify the Office:** By bringing the Ombudsman's services directly to the communities, the initiative helps demystify the institution, making it less of a distant, intimidating government office and more of an accessible advocate for public rights. This direct interaction builds trust and confidence among citizens.
2. **Empower Citizens:** A key objective is to empower citizens by educating them about their rights and the avenues available for redress against maladministration, abuse of power, or unfair treatment by public officials. This knowledge equips them to assert their rights effectively and demand accountability.
3. **Bridge the Governance Gap:** By establishing a direct line of communication and complaint resolution between the citizenry and the government, 'Ombudsman Mashinani' acts as a crucial bridge. It allows citizens to voice their grievances and seeks to ensure that public service delivery is responsive, fair, and efficient, thereby fostering improved public administration.
4. **Gather Ground-Level Intelligence:** These grassroots engagements are invaluable for the Ombudsman to gain a deeper, first hand understanding of the systemic issues affecting communities. This intelligence helps the CAJ identify patterns of maladministration, propose policy and legislative reforms, and advocate for broader improvements in public service delivery.
5. **Promote Alternative Dispute Resolution:** 'Ombudsman Mashinani' often serves as a platform to promote and facilitate informal dispute resolution methods, such as conciliation and mediation, which can be more culturally appropriate and efficient for resolving minor grievances at the local level before they escalate.

In essence, 'Ombudsman Mashinani' embodies the CAJ's commitment to ensuring that administrative justice is not an abstract concept but a tangible reality for every Kenyan, regardless of their location or socio-economic standing. It is a proactive approach to good governance that seeks to strengthen public trust and accountability from the ground up.

**Q. I would like to know the best outreach practices, both in Kenya and in Netherlands. Just to learn from the people from these countries.**

The Office of the Ombudsman in Kenya employs a multifaceted approach to outreach, strategically combining physical presence, leveraging existing government service points, and capitalizing on broader public engagement opportunities. This reflects a pragmatic strategy to reach diverse populations across a geographically varied country.

**1. Kenya's Outreach Practices (Office of the Ombudsman / CAJ):**

* **Decentralized County Offices:** The establishment of fully-fledged Ombudsman offices in various counties is a cornerstone of the CAJ's outreach strategy. These regional hubs serve as direct access points for citizens, enabling them to lodge complaints, seek advice, and engage with the Ombudsman's team without necessarily having to travel to the Nairobi headquarters. The listed locations — Mombasa, Nyahururu, Eldoret, Kisumu, Garissa, Isiolo, and Makueni — demonstrate a commitment to covering diverse regions, including arid and semi-arid lands, major urban centers, and agricultural heartlands. These offices foster a localized presence and build familiarity and trust within their respective communities.
* **"Huduma Centres" Desks:** The integration of Ombudsman desk officers within "Huduma Centres" is a highly effective and innovative outreach mechanism. Huduma Centres are 'one-stop shops' for various government services across Kenya, designed to streamline public service delivery. By placing Ombudsman desks within these already popular and accessible centers, the CAJ strategically leverages existing public infrastructure and foot traffic. Citizens visiting for other government services (e.g., identity cards, birth certificates, business registration) can conveniently inquire about administrative justice issues or lodge complaints without making a separate trip, significantly enhancing accessibility and public awareness of the Ombudsman's services.
* **Opportunistic Outreach and Leveraging Existing Events:** The CAJ strategically utilizes opportunities when staff are already in various counties for other official duties (e.g., training, meetings). This allows for cost-effective outreach, where the Ombudsman's team can conduct awareness sessions, engage with local leaders, or hold impromptu clinics. This flexible approach ensures that every official presence in a county becomes a chance to enhance public engagement and visibility, maximizing resource utilization.