

Uganda breaks into global top 25 for outsourcing

As Digital Jobs Expand Beyond Kampala

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At 10 a.m. on a Tuesday in Gulu, 26-year-old Amara is already deep into her workday. Her client is in Tokyo. The assignment: rebuilding a website for a Japanese retail company.

She has never been to Japan. She has never needed to.

For years, many young Ugandans were told that the path to a successful career in technology led abroad—or at least to larger regional hubs such as Nairobi. Today, that assumption is being challenged by a growing digital economy that is bringing international work directly to Uganda.

Amara is one of 1,500 trained digital freelancers working through Maarifasasa Limited, a Ugandan company that serves clients across Japan, the United States, Germany, Denmark, Norway, Belgium, South Korea, Ghana and Eswatini. Her story reflects a broader shift taking place across the country, one that has now earned international recognition.

According to the 2026 Global Outsourcing Talent Index, Uganda ranks 24th out of 193 countries assessed for competitiveness in outsourced digital services. That places the country among the world's top 13 per cent outsourcing destinations, second in the East African Community after Kenya, and among only seven African countries to make the global top 25.

The ranking is more than a statistical milestone. It signals that Uganda is increasingly being viewed by international companies as a credible destination for digital services, technology support and business process outsourcing.

In labour-cost competitiveness, Uganda performed even more strongly, ranking 12th globally, ahead of several larger economies with more established technology sectors. The assessment reflects the calculations global firms make when deciding where to outsource work, weighing factors such as talent, affordability, reliability and scalability.

The report's conclusion was unequivocal.

"Uganda is no longer an emerging outsourcing market. It is increasingly a trusted destination for global digital services, offering talent, affordability, reliability, and innovation," according to the Global Outsourcing Talent Index 2026.

For Uganda, the achievement is tied closely to a long-term policy agenda. The country's National Business Process Outsourcing Policy was designed to position Uganda as a preferred destination for global digital services, while the Fourth National Development Plan (NDP IV) identifies digital



Dr Aminah Zawedde

transformation and human capital development as central pillars of economic growth.

The logic is straightforward. Uganda has one of the youngest populations in the world, with more than 73 per cent of its citizens under the age of 30. Traditionally, that demographic reality has been framed as a challenge requiring jobs, education and public services. Increasingly, however, policymakers see it as a competitive advantage.

The global outsourcing industry appears to agree.

Rather than viewing Uganda's youthful population as a burden, international companies are beginning to see it as a skilled and trainable workforce capable of delivering services to clients thousands of kilometres away.

"This ranking is not accidental," said Dr Aminah Zawedde, Permanent Secretary at the Ministry of ICT and National Guidance. "It is the outcome of deliberate policy, investment in ICT training aligned to international standards, infrastructure development and creating the conditions for Ugandan enterprises to compete globally. NDP IV gave us the framework. Our young people are delivering the results."

The country's rise has also been supported by strategic international partnerships.

One of the most significant is the Uganda-Japan ICT Connectivity Project, known as UJ-Connect, a collaboration between the Ministry of ICT and Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA). The initiative has facilitated 51 business-matching

engagements between Ugandan and Japanese technology companies and created BizLink, a platform that connects Ugandan software engineers and BPO firms with outsourcing opportunities from Japan.

Another important contributor has been the United Kingdom Trade Partnerships Programme, which has worked with Ugandan IT and BPO companies to strengthen compliance with international standards and improve access to British markets. The partnership also helped launch "The Tech Pearl," Uganda's rebranded value proposition for the global outsourcing market.

Such initiatives may sound technical, but they address a practical challenge. In the highly competitive world of outsourced services, visibility matters almost as much as capability. Countries that are recognised and trusted by international clients are more likely to attract contracts, investment and long-term business relationships.

That growing confidence is already being felt by Ugandan firms.

Beyond Maarifasasa Limited, a rising number of local companies now provide customer support, cybersecurity, software development, data management, digital marketing, quality assurance and market research services to clients across Europe, Asia and North America. Some are established players. Others are young businesses expanding rapidly in response to growing demand.

For Brian, 29, who leads a quality assurance team at a Kampala-based firm serving clients in three European countries, the transformation is deeply personal.

A few years ago, he applied for a BPO job in Kenya but never received a response. Today, he works for a Ugandan company competing successfully in international markets.

"I used to think the real jobs were somewhere else," he said. "They were here the whole time. We just needed more people to build them." He added: "I thank the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of ICT & National Guidance and the team at the Ministry; I now earn a decent living."

Still, the ranking is not a finish line. The Global Outsourcing Talent Index highlights areas where Uganda must continue investing if it hopes to climb higher. Expanding broadband infrastructure, scaling digital skills training and strengthening private-sector capacity will be critical if the country is to move from a promising player to a dominant force in Africa's outsourcing industry.

The Ministry of ICT has already signalled plans to deepen those investments. The policy framework exists. The challenge now is execution.