e-judiciary Practices in the Trinidad and Tobago Judiciary – Ensuring Access to Justice in a Pandemic

Jacqueline A. Morris

Judicial Education Institute of Trinidad and Tobago

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Correspondence Address: [jmorris@ttlawcourts.org](mailto:jmorris@ttlawcourts.org)

Hall of Justice, Knox St., Port of Spain, Republic of Trinidad and Tobago

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Abstract

The Covid19 pandemic forced court systems around the world to change rapidly to continue providing access to Justice during the lockdowns. The Judiciary of Trinidad and Tobago was already well positioned to make the switch to online systems to maintain access and client satisfaction, as they had already started a major e-judiciary transformation. The pandemic caused the projects already in the planning stages to be moved up on the timeline, and implemented in a very rapid mode, while staff and courts had already quickly switched to virtual work from home (WFH). This paper explains the processes, projects, and the goals and rationale of the Judiciary as they implemented these projects. The research was heavily based on project documentation, as well as information from the Chief Justice and other Court Executives. From the research, conclusions drawn included that the Judiciary of Trinidad and Tobago was successful in implementing ICT-based projects to provide e-services to clients in short order in the pandemic largely because of the years that they had already invested in process re-engineering, culture change, and foundational ICT infrastructure work.

Keywords: Covid 19 pandemic, judicial technology; virtual courts; judicial e-services, court efficiency, access to justice.

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e-judiciary Practices in the Trinidad and Tobago Judiciary – Ensuring Access to Justice in a Pandemic

In March of 2020, the world was hit by a viral pandemic. Responses included shuttering buildings, including Courts, and having as many people as possible work from home. In Trinidad and Tobago there was a complete shutdown from March to the end of April. There were several subsequent lockdowns in the succeeding period, as well as a six-month long State of Emergency and curfew that ended on November 17, 2021. Closing Court buildings meant that the clients of the Judiciary of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago (JoRTT) were unable to easily access the Courts in person for the Justice services of which they were in need.

Fortunately, the J0RTT had already begun a process of digital transformation. What was needed was a rapid re-evaluation of the plan, to place remote access to justice services at its core and to create and prioritise projects that could fulfil that objective.

# Literature Review

From the start of the pandemic in March 2020, courts all over the world began to consider how they could continue to function in the lockdowns that accompanied the first months of the pandemic. The World Justice Project (The World Justice Project, 2021) noted that “The COVID-19 pandemic has laid bare significant deficits and inequities in fulfilling the promise of [UN Sustainable Development Goal 16](https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/peace-justice/) to "provide access to justice for all." This imperative forced courts to attempt to move to work from home modalities, create virtual courts, and move paper-based services online. Some courts needed to start almost from scratch, and needed to purchase and distribute thousands of laptops, develop a WAN, implement videoconferencing, and train Judges and Court Staff virtually overnight.

In the USA, the National Conference of State Court Administrators, in conjunction with the Conference of Chief Justices, created a Rapid Response Team to help state courts move forward during the pandemic. They worked on three main tracks, which were court management, technology, and communications and funding. They identified and developed innovations and new practices that helped strengthen courts during the pandemic, and after. (NCSC, 2020)

However, the JoRTT was in a much better position than many courts, in both the developed and developing world. By 2015 the JoRTT had already begun a process of transformation towards an e-judiciary. (Ministry of Planning and Development, 2015) When the pandemic hit, court records were already digitized, there were already rooms in prisons set up with videoconferencing tools to allow prisoners to attend court virtually without the cost and security considerations of moving prisoners securely to and from Court, the Virtual Court system using Microsoft Teams was already in limited use, and e-services such as online payments (accessible by both banked and unbanked court clients) were already in use. The JoRTT had already begun to implement a new case management system, and had already developed and partially implemented several online customer services, including CourtPay for family court-ordered payments (maintenance payments), CourtMail for secure communications between the Court and attorneys, and e-filing of court documents. (Archie, 2019a)

# Research Objective

This research project was designed to investigate the process of designing, prioritising, and implementing the projects that the JoRTT onboarded in two phases – the projects that were implemented from 2015 to 2020, and from March 2020 to the present time. The earlier projects allowed the JoRTT to enter the pandemic phase in a very strong position. Projects implemented from the beginning of the pandemic were following on the tracks laid down in the earlier plan, but at a much faster pace (Archie, 2021a)

## Method. The research method was determined to be qualitative, using an intrinsic descriptive case study method, and the specific methodology would be, in the main, document analysis and semi-structured interviews. Both purposive and snowball methods were used for interview sampling.

The questions that this research intends to investigate are:

Overarching question: How and why did the Judiciary transform itself into an organisation that provides remote access to its clients for Judicial services during the pandemic?

Sub-questions:

* What projects did the Judiciary undertake to support the changes that they wanted to make?
* What was the rationale behind choosing the projects that they did?
* What were the process changes that facilitated this transformation?
* What were the tools that facilitated this transformation?

## Data Collection. The initial outreach for interviews, data and documents was made to the persons who made decisions about the projects, the persons who facilitated the data used to support the decision making, and the persons who implemented the projects – they were asked for documentation that supported the decision making process that they went through. They were also asked for additional names to approach.

These initial persons were:

* The Honourable the Chief Justice of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago
* The Court Executive Administrator
* The Director of Information Technology
* The Information Technology Project Manager
* The Manager of the Planning Department
* The Deputy Court Executive Administrator, Court Administrative Unit

Documents requested and supplied included:

* + Public Sector Investment Programme (PSIP) documents
  + Project proposals
  + Project Reports
  + Annual Reports
  + Speeches and presentations

Subsequent to the document analysis, explanatory questions were raised with the same persons, and others. Some were answered in writing, via text message or email, and others were responded to in virtual video conferences or by phone. The video conferences and telephone calls were recorded and transcribed using an artificial intelligence-based transcription service.

All of the data was coded inductively using MAXQDA qualitative analysis software.

## Data Analysis

The initial inductive coding process resulted in a list of approximately 50 codes. These were reorganised into five (5) major themes, with three (3) sub-themes. These were:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Theme | Sub-theme | Description |
| Judicial Goals |  | this theme focused on the strategic goals that the Judiciary focused on implementing. |
| Rationale |  | this theme dealt with the thinking of the Court Executive in the choice of projects, the timing of projects, and the Court locations of projects. |
| Projects |  | this theme was broken down into sub-themes of |
|  | Court Projects | including Processes and Rules, and Court ICT-based projects |
|  | Administrative Projects | including changes to Financial Processes, and administrative focused ICT projects |
|  | Support Projects | these projects included both Court and Administrative processes, but transcended them and were focused on supporting the clients of the Court in easily accessing Court services. |
| Process Reengineering |  | this dealt with the processes that needed to be reengineered, how that was done, and the change management activities that the Judiciary implemented |
| Feedback |  | this encompassed the reactions of persons to the various innovations and projects implemented in the courts |

Table 1. Themes and sub-themes developed in the data analysis

# Discussion

## Verbatim quotes are used throughout this document, as I believe that hearing the authentic voices of the participants supports the grounding of the themes in a more illustrative manner.

## Judicial Goals. The goals of the JoRTT were elaborated on in several of the documents, especially the speeches of the Chief Justice. Certain terms appeared frequently – Client, Customer, Service, Access to Justice, efficiency.

## The law term has been a year of continuous progress, learning and development. The Division has made strides to becoming a modern customer centered environment where court services are delivered in an efficient, effective and accessible manner. (Archie, 2021a)

## With the inevitable shutdowns due to the pandemic, our strategic goals became continued access to justice and safety of our customers and our staff. (Archie, 2021a)

In addition, from the PSIP documents, we find projects to support the following goals for the JoRTT:

* Increase efficiency of the judiciary system through the provision of e-services
* Development of Customer Service Centers at the Nation's Court Buildings
* Improve efficiency in the service delivery of judicial services and improve systems for witness care
* Improve the performance of the judicial management systems
* Transformation of the Court Reporting System to increase the efficiency of court recording
* Improve the timeliness and quality of court proceedings
* SDG Goal 17: Promote Peaceful and Inclusive Societies for Sustainable Development, Provide Access to Justice for All and Build Effective, Accountable and Inclusive Institutions at all Levels. (Ministry of Planning and Development, 2019)

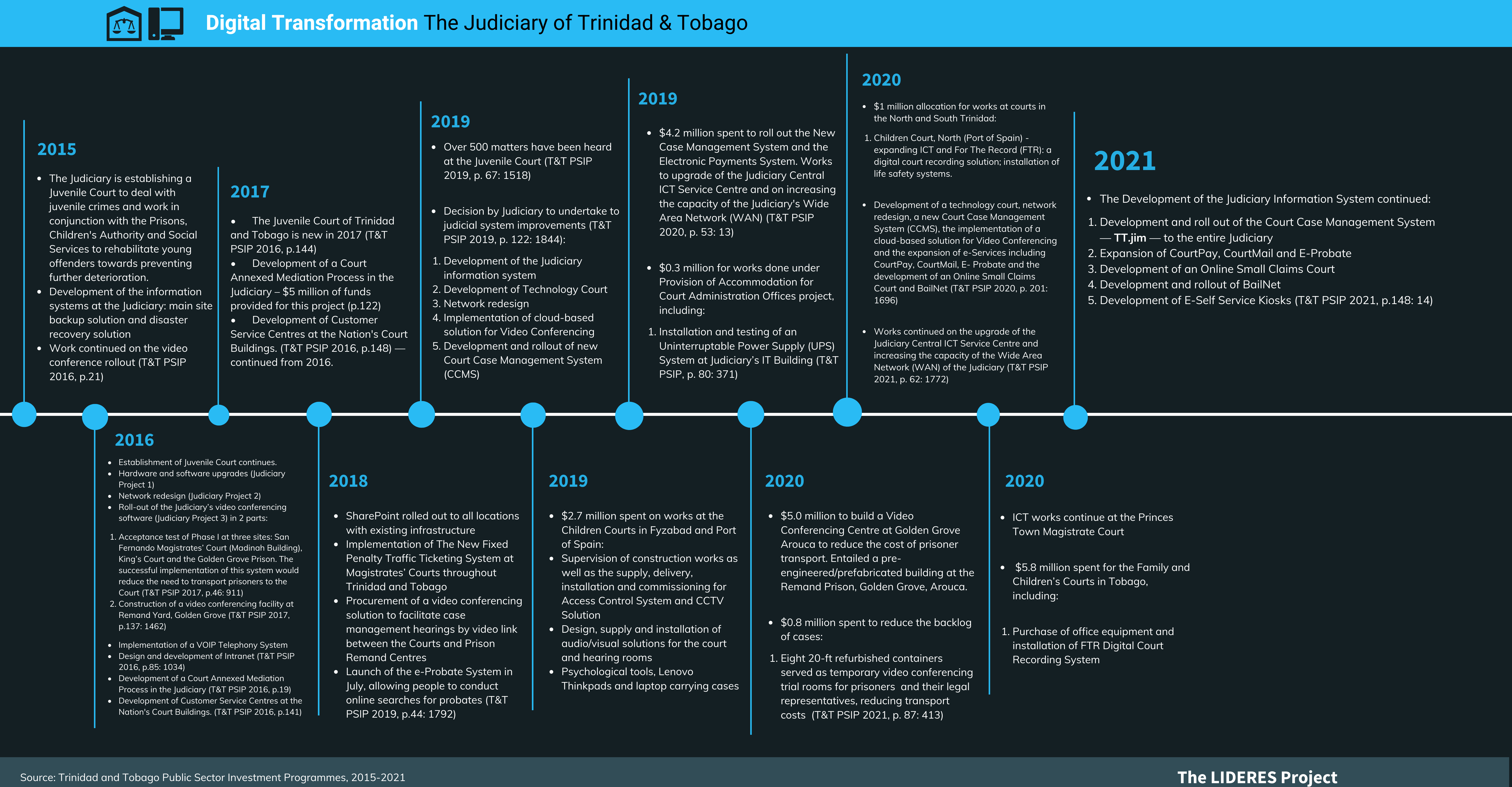
The PSIP projects that were funded for the Judiciary’s digital transformation are shown on the timeline in Figure 1.

Figure 1. PSIP funded projects for the Judiciary’s digital transformation

## Rationale. There were more than 24 coded segments that supported the rationale for the implementation of project activities. Some of the quotes follow.

“The aim was to ensure the courts, in the event of an emergency, could remain open and accessible without the barriers to accessibility that location and travel restrictions could present”. (Morris-Alleyne, 2020)

Suffice it to say that by the beginning of 2020, we were well poised to transition the judiciary to a place where we could leverage the best available technology in support of more rational, streamlined and effective workflows and processes. And then there was COVID-19. Crises present both incentive and opportunities for change. In order to maintain service delivery, some priorities were reordered and timelines advanced. Guided by our medical response team in the preservation of a safe environment, and development of new protocols for court users, staff, and facilities management, we have made the transition to e-delivery of justice quite successfully, and the expectations and desires of our clients have now shifted towards full acceptance. This is the new normal. (Archie, 2021a)

The JoRTT, beginning around 2010, determined that **customer service** was their overriding goal. The change in philosophy to a client-centred model was key to everything that the JoRTT implemented subsequently. (Archie, 2019b)

With client services and access to justice as the lodestones, the JoRTT began a process of re-inventing itself into a modern, efficient, data driven and technology supported e-judiciary. This process began with a hard look at the traditional processes that permeated the JoRTT. It made no sense to simply add technology to an outdated process. They took advantage of the implementation of technology to re-engineer the processes.

The focus on changing the rules, structure, and processes started long before, with the creation of the Court Administration Unit (CAU) in 1998 as shown in Figure 2.

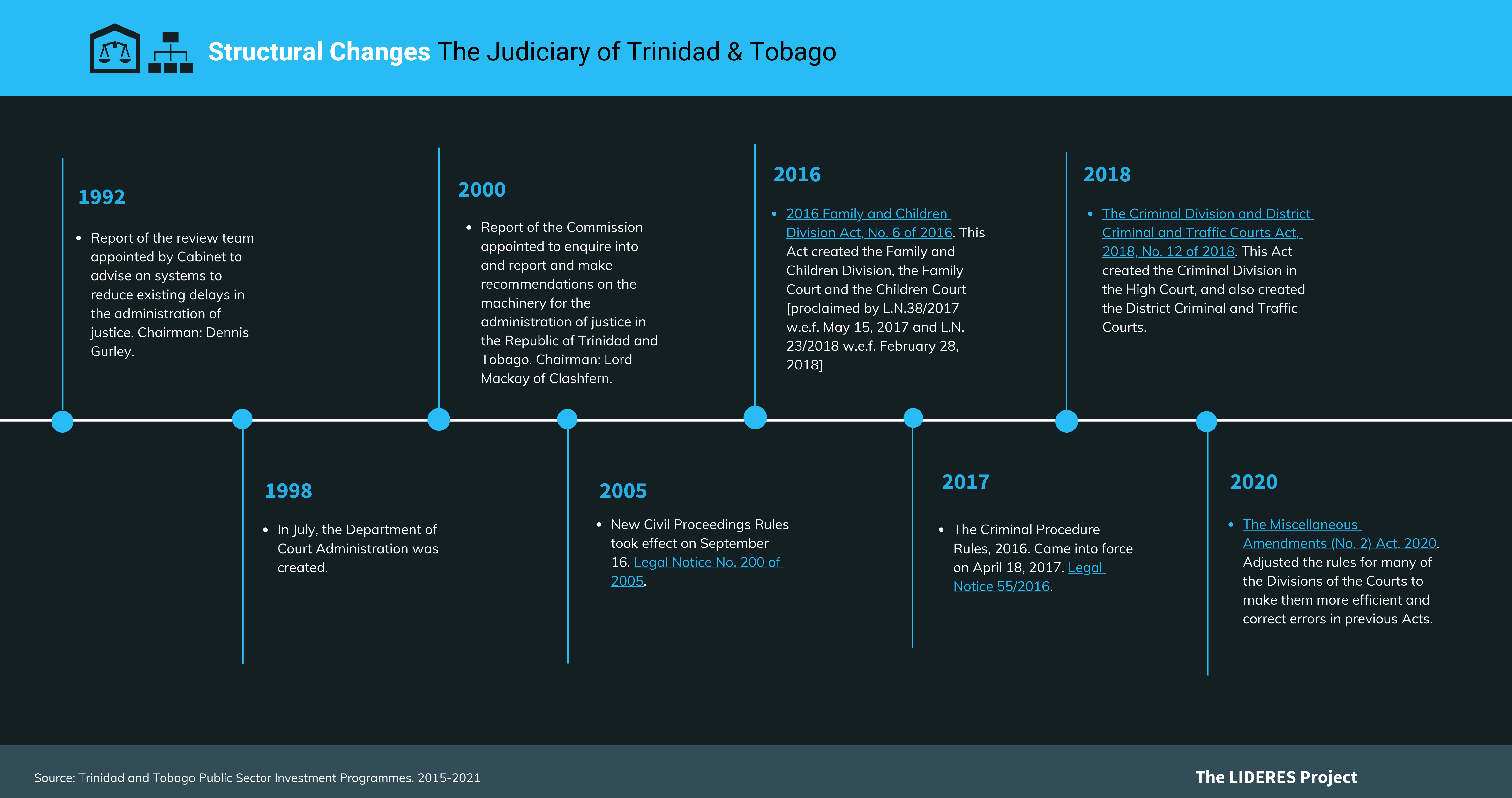


Figure 2 – Changes made to the Judicial Structure and the supporting Legislation

US Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, Warren Burger first indicated the need for a specialist Court Administration function, saying

The courts of this country need management, which busy and overworked judges, with drastically caseloads, cannot give. We need…trained administrators or managers to manage and direct the machinery so that Judges can concentrate on their primary duty of judging. (Burger, 1969)

Court Administration Departments professionally manage internal operations, deal with organisational system complexity, large workloads and volumes, and ever-increasing expectations for organisational performance and accountability. (*Court Administration*, 2021)

“At the JoRTT, this Unit, staffed by specialists, led the thrust to improve the management of the administration of the Courts, in order to provide better and faster access to Justice in Trinidad and Tobago”. (The Judiciary of Trinidad and Tobago, 2021b)

With the implementation of the CAU and the legislative changes that were made to support the Autonomy of the Judiciary, the JoRTT was well placed to begin its transformation to an e-judiciary. This transformation began with changes to case management. The software in use at the time was Judicial Enforcement Management **(**JEMS), implemented in 1993. This was an expensive proprietary software licensed from a foreign company. It supported automated workflow and court processes but was difficult to configure to suit the JoRTT’s processes. It was replaced by TT.jim, an open-source software system created by a consortium that included (at the time) the National Center for State Courts (NCSC) and the Judiciary of Nigeria. This consortium has now expanded to 22 countries, with Namibia being the most recent to join.

with Nigeria and the National Center for State Courts, we formed the nucleus of a consortium to develop case management software with no licensing costs. That consortium has now grown to the extent that 22 interested countries were represented at the consortium meeting in early October. With Namibia being the latest to formally join, we will continue to benefit from innovations and improvements developed in any of the member countries. And TT Jim is now in its second iteration facts to that fruitful collaboration whose product is on its way to becoming the gold standard internationally. (Archie, 2021b)

TT.jim was developed in-house and has been rolled out to almost all the Divisions and Courts in theJoRTT, beginning with the Family and Children Division (FCD) in 2018. Version 2 was developed during the pandemic and is currently in the rollout process. The software is also being rolled out to the Probate Division.

In October 2021, the JoRTT had 50 ICT projects under development, with all but 2 being developed in-house. (Archie, 2021b) The decision to build an in-house ICT development team has been considered to be extremely prescient.

e-initiatives that had been developed and were optional became essential and others that were at varying stages of development were accelerated. The organisation sought innovative and in some areas untried approaches to facilitate citizens’ rights to have their matters resolved by the courts (Morris-Alleyne, 2020)

Other ICT based projects implemented included:

**Digital signing and stamping** – The Judiciary uses two electronic signing solutions recognized as tamper-free and built on encryption technologies. During the ‘lockdown’, Judges, Registrars and senior administrative staff used the solution to digitally sign, stamp and dispatch Notices, Summonses, Warrants, affidavits, declarations and other court documents to Attorneys remotely and securely, without having to interface personally. An electronic seal was also developed and used to affix documents filed electronically with the official seal, where appropriate. Court office staff are now able to prepare and transmit documents electronically to the Judge, judicial or administrative officer for their review and signing, which they were able to do from any internet- enabled device from any location. (Archie, 2020)

**Network infrastructure upgrade (WAN and LAN) to support remote work and virtual courts**. At the Judiciary, works continued on the upgrade of the Judiciary Central ICT Service Centre and increasing the capacity of the Wide Area Network (WAN) of the Judiciary (Ministry of Planning and Development, 2020)

## Implementation of Digital Voice Writing for transcription and e-certification of transcripts.

In the virtual world, the Court Reporting Services Unit (CRSU) conducts real-time reporting for Court of Appeal and High Court matters. This is accomplished with the use of CAT Reporters and Digital Voice Writers. The CRSU has been working towards finalizing the e-certification of transcripts. The e-service process involves the use of DocuSign … a cloud-based electronic signature solution. As a result of this e-initiative pilot with the Supreme Court, any court reporter will be able to have their transcripts certified electronically before a Registrar, Assistant Registrar or District Clerk of the Peace (DCOP). The process improves productivity by eliminating the costs for paper and printing as well as delays in transporting the documents to the various Court locations. (Chief Justice Speeches 2017-2021 Law Term\CJ Speech 2020: 17: 4 - 17: 1593)

Also, … we've been working with digital voice technology for producing transcripts. So while we have been using audio digital recording systems, for some time, we had found that in our jurisdiction, and I found that in a lot of the Caribbean jurisdictions on the whole, there's still a need to reduce that to a hardcopy transcript. And the act of doing that has been quite elusive a way of doing that quickly and efficiently. So we married two things. And we have trained a large group of digital voice writers who use digital voice writing technology and work with audio digital recording systems. So therefore, we have been able to counter that and that's an area which we're very pleased about. (World Bank, 2021)

## Virtual Courts using Microsoft Teams virtual meeting software, as well as CaseLines Digital Evidence Management Software.

Early in 2019, the Court’s Administration began working on an ICT solution as an alternative to in-person hearings. (Morris-Alleyne, 2020) Videoconferencing was already a component of court operations given its initial introduction to the Judiciary in 2005.

We of course, have also been spending a lot of energy on remote hearing technology. That has been extremely important; we started to do it before COVID hit. And we were able to make the transition quite quickly to virtual courts completely, because of the fact that we had started to look at that. (Transcripts\World Bank Panel Discussion 2021-11-13\_08-50-05: 10)

Early in the law term, the Judiciary’s Information Communications Technology (ICT) Unit began working on an ICT solution as an alternative to in-person hearings. The aim was to ensure that the courts, in the event of an emergency, could remain open and accessible without the barriers to accessibility that location and travel restrictions could present. The research was well advanced when the COVID-19 pandemic stay-at-home measures were implemented.

Videoconferencing was already a component of court operations given its initial introduction to the Judiciary in 2005. Systems were in operation at several courtrooms and prison sites across Trinidad and Tobago that facilitated hearings involving stakeholders located outside of Trinidad and Tobago and/or persons who for reasons of health, disability, security or otherwise were unable to physically attend court.

Due to COVID -19 concerns, Court Administration devised a very quick solution for prison inmates to appear virtually from the prison. We were able to acquire and convert shipping containers into fully outfitted virtual hearing rooms at the Golden Grove Remand Prison, Maximum Security Prison and Eastern Regional Correctional Facility. These, in addition to previously existing systems at the Youth Transformation and Rehabilitation Centre (formerly YTC), Frederick Street prison, Scarborough prison and female prison at Arouca brought the total number of virtual hearing rooms at prison/correctional facilities to fourteen (14).

The technology evolved into a virtual cloud-based meeting room to which internal and external stakeholders could connect and communicate in real time. The solution allows the Judiciary’s ICT staff to remotely manage and automate the processes for court-to-court and court-to-prison video connections. Inmates attend their hearings virtually from the containerized solution on the prison compound and their counsel may attend from the prison compound or remotely from their home, office or other location.

(Archie, 2020)

After a period of use of the Virtual Courtroom with Microsoft Teams, the need for additional evidence presentation software to make the virtual courtroom more efficient became clear. This led to the implementation of the Thomson Reuters CaseLines softwar, first in the High Court. “We now have full virtual hearings about to be further enhanced by the use of case presentation software. (Archie, 2020)

CaseLines is litigation support software that facilitates paperless access to uploaded trial bundles, and affords advantages in preparing for and navigating evidence. For example, just imagine, even in a jury trial, the efficiency of an automatic page direction to the relevant photograph or specific timestamp on CCTV footage, (Archie, 2021b)

CaseLines software, which is Litigation Support Technology, and case presentation technology. So we anticipate that that will further enhance our ability to deal with virtual courts. But it's also available for you know, if and when our courts come back into the courthouses. (World Bank, 2021)

## CourtMail.

The use of CourtMail at the Judiciary began in 2018 and expanded over the 2019- 2020 Law term and the need for this service intensified during the COVID-19 restrictions. The service, which was developed in-house originally as an electronic solution for communicating with and mailing court orders and notices to Attorneys-at- Law and court parties in a fast and secure format, was developed further and is now an integral tool used for electronically signing, stamping and sealing court and other official documents. (Morris-Alleyne, 2020)

## Electronic filing of documents.

Persons needing to initiate an action or having to comply with schedules for filing documents were allowed to do so via the readily accessible and convenient to use on-line portal. Through its e-services portal available on the Judiciary’s website, Attorneys-at-Law, self-represented litigants, Police Officers and other justice sector agencies gained online access to court offices throughout Trinidad and Tobago to file court documents without having to commute to a court building. To date (July 13, 2021) four thousand, four hundred and forty one attorneys (4441) and one thousand eight hundred and forty two (1840) *pro se* litigants have registered for E-Services. The organisation provided public access kiosks at High Court locations for the convenience of members of the public who did not have on-line access personally. The interface contained simple and easy to follow instructions for scanning and uploading documents to the e-services portal and help was available. The placement of these kiosks helped to limit in-person interaction at Counters. As at July 13, 2021, one hundred and eighty six thousand three hundred and ninety (186,390) documents have been filed electronically at Court offices throughout Trinidad and Tobago. (Morris-Alleyne, 2020)

## Attorney Registration and Fees payments.

By integrating E-Services with CourtPay and CourtMail, the Judiciary allows attorneys to pay for their practising fees electronically. CourtPay allows attorneys to pay via credit card or CourtPay voucher, which can be purchased by numerous locations across Trinidad and Tobago. Once payments are processed, an electronic Practising Certificate is delivered to the inbox of the attorney using CourtMail. Up to the end of July, two-hundred and ninety (290) practising certificates had been paid for online via E-Services. The system verifies Attorneys’ eligibility against the Roll and persons who are not in good standing are unable to file. However, the portal guides Attorneys who wish to bring their practicing certificates up-to-date by paying their fees online through a secured gateway. (Archie, 2020)

## Probate Searching, Lodging and Filing.

Among some of the other improvements introduced during the past year were the introduction of online Probate searches with a guaranteed maximum turnaround time of three days, and by this time next year we expect to have full e-lodging and processing of probate applications and queries, including an online template for pro-se applicants. All of this is in keeping with our movement to a complete, fully integrated E-Filing platform across the whole judiciary. (Archie, 2018)

Attorneys-at-Law were able to submit probate lodgings for review electronically on the E- Services Platform. Once processed the Probate Registry issues queries to the Attorney or an appointment date for filing of original documents over the Counter. The Probate registry received and processed over one thousand (1000) lodgings since the system launched in May 2020. (Archie, 2020)

## Administrative Projects

In order to ensure that the JoRTT had a solid administrative foundation to support the e-judiciary transformation, there was a need to strengthen the administrative support systems. The Court Administration Unit of the JoRTT holds the role of Accountability for the financial resources entrusted to its care, more specifically, the collection of state revenue, the expenditure of funds appropriated by Parliament for its operation, and the trust funds that must hold is also important to the judiciary. The Financial function of the Court Administration Unit is closely tied to the CourtPay project, given that during the pandemic, a majority of the funds collected by the JoRTT were collected via the CourtPay system.

The Administration Department is also responsible for the administrative records of the JoRTT, including Human Resources. The Human Resource function was one of the foundational systems that was updated. “Our HR processes are also being modernized and we are now doing recruitment online from application to initial screening and assessment.” (Archie, 2018). During the pandemic, the entire recruiting and on boarding process was done virtually. Given that staff were also in Work from Home mode, some staff were interviewed, contracted, hired, provisioned with necessary technology, and started work in a purely virtual environment. (Personal communication, 2021)

Other Administrative Projects implemented in the past year included:

## Financial Information Management System

During the last Law Term measures were also adopted to strengthen and modernize the Judiciary's financial management. (Archie, 2021a)

an integrated electronic court payments solution to receive disburse and account for all monies paid into and out of court makes it simple, accessible, fast, effective and reliable. (Archie, 2021a)

The automated Financial Information Management Software is fully designed, developed, and maintained by our in house information and communication technology staff and is compliant with the Public Service financial rules and regulations. The system facilitates online processing of statutory and contractual payment obligations, produces on demand customized reports on these obligations and alerts the organisation about the financial resources required at specific periods during the financial year. This removes the current limitation of access to paper records during normal working hours. (Archie, 2021a)

With regard to collection of funds on behalf of the Government and the JoRTT itself, the CourtPay system has been invaluable.

The judiciary now collects, reconciles in advance, and remits to the Treasury daily via automated clearing house, all state revenue collected online. (Archie, 2021a)

## Electronic Vote Book.

The electronic vote book, a bespoke contract management, invoice processing and supplier payments system was fine-tuned, and new features developed in the past year. While the automated system operates alongside the established paper-based system, we hope to convince the relevant state agencies to approve its use as a replacement for the antiquated manual paper-based financial management and records keeping system by the end of the 2021 calendar year. (Archie, 2021a)

Other financial administrative initiatives included the following:

## - Electronic Pay Record Cards

An electronic system developed to replace the handwritten employees’ pay record cards. The new system incorporates automatic calculations, ease of access to authorized persons, secured storage and improved records management.

## - Electronic Maintenance Cards

A database application developed to record information captured on the Maintenance Card. The system provides easier access to information and the ability to generate reports.

## - Movement of records

An application developed to record the location and details of court records, to replace manual handwritten forms.

## - Correspondence management

An application developed to record incoming/outgoing correspondence and the relevant actions taken.

## - Online requisition requests

An online system for submitting requisition requests and notification when items are ready for collection.

## Non-criminal register

An application that records non-criminal matters at the District Courts, with task generation, notifications, and document generation built in.

# Support Technologies

It may seem ironic that given the focus of the JoRTT on the services that they furnish to clients, that the client support technology projects come last in this discussion. However, the point must be made that without the infrastructure, Court process and technology advances, and administrative projects that were put in place, the JoRTT would not have been able to provide the best possible experience for its clients.

Some of the support projects have already been mentioned, such as CourtPay, CourtMail, e-filing, and e-signatures. These projects supported access to justice for Court clients during the pandemic. Additionally, the JoRTT implemented a technology-supported Customer Contact Centre to support Court Clients in October 2021.

## Customer Contact Centre.

The Contact Centre is a digital solution which seeks to provide a platform for Judiciary customers to access services more directly. The Contact Centre will provide customer support for persons seeking information on court services, guidance in using its e-service platform to pay or contest fines, and to respond in general to customer queries. (The Judiciary of Trinidad and Tobago, 2021a)

## Domestic Violence Portal.

During the pandemic, the JoRTT created a Domestic Violence Hotline for requests for Protection orders.

The Domestic Violence Portal was constructed to quickly dispatch Orders, Summonses, and documents pertinent to Domestic Violence to the Gender-Based Violence Unit of the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service. (Morris-Alleyne, 2020)

## Bail payments online

This project will be implemented soon. It will afford another option for convenient e-payments by clients during the pandemic.

# Feedback

As a necessary adjunct to the activities that the JoRTT undertook to support their clients’ access to justice, feedback is constantly solicited by the customer facing staff. Feedback here is from attorneys, clients ,other internal and external stakeholders, and more.

Several attorneys commented on the convenience virtual hearings provided them.

They were pleased with their ability to appear at geographically dispersed courts on

the same day, thus reducing the need to seek adjournments. They expressed

appreciation at not having to endure work downtime while waiting at a courthouse for

their matters to be called; and not having to drive to a location, look for parking, walk

to the courthouse and wait, all for a fifteen minute case management conference.

Many attorneys who initially expressed displeasure with the arrangement

subsequently indicated their support after participating in virtual hearings. (Morris-Alleyne, 2020)

Another interesting thing is that and where we have found a very good uptick, and in this whole area with virtual courts, is actually in domestic violence matters. And domestic violence victims have expressed great thanks for the fact that they can appear using their smartphone and not have to come into close contact with the alleged perpetrator. And also they don't have to know where you are. So as simple as that is, that has really assisted so greatly. (World Bank, 2021)

Additionally, there was feedback from other Courts around the world. There were many positive comments about the innovation and forward planning that the JoRTT did, as well as the cutting-edge technology that it has implemented.

We heard a lot about the impact of technology, improving the ability of very, shall we say ordinary citizens, often impoverished, to access the justice system, whether it means that they no longer have to travel to a court is a difficult journey, whether they can easily make payments. Then we also heard some remarkable innovations. And I mentioned earlier I just particularly love the idea of the local courts in shipping containers. It's such a good idea and things that people on this call can easily learn from and replicate around the world. We also heard about barriers and the thing that I've taken from that conversation about the barriers is mostly that those barriers are transitional. They are about migration, about change management, about training. (World Bank, 2021)

There are some people out there and Trinidad and Tobago is one of them that are ahead of you now. And so it's time for you to follow up and look at the sort of innovations that you've heard today. (World Bank, 2021)

# Conclusion

The research questions that this investigation intended to answer are:

1. What projects did the Judiciary undertake to support the changes that they wanted to make?
2. What was the rationale behind choosing the projects that they did?
3. What were the process changes that facilitated this transformation?
4. What were the tools that facilitated this transformation?

The projects that the JoRTT undertook were many. They have been listed and discussed earlier in this paper.

The main rationale behind choosing the projects was based on the JoRTT’s overarching philosophy of a judiciary as an organisation that provides a service to the people. Based on this philosophy and the values of the JoRTT, independence, integrity and access to justice and fairness, we can build the rationale. The projects chosen supported:

* Access to justice and safety of our customers and our staff.
* Ensuring equal and fair justice
* Rules, processes, and procedures that created a strong foundation for the additional projects that directly supported client access and satisfaction.

The process changes that facilitated the transformation were supported by changes in legislation (Figure ) These processes followed a policy for ICT of nurturing curiosity, harnessing valuable data and having the skills to translate it into meaningful insights and being able to act on those insights, a policy of pairing technology with the right human skills and investing in adaptability, curiosity and flexibility. (Archie, 2021a)

Specific changes included the re-structuring of the High Court of the JoRTT into Divisions, the expansion of the Court Administrative Unit (CAU), changes in the summary courts to District Courts, with Registrars and Masters, changes in financial, human resource and management processes, focus on professional Planning, Learning and Development for staff and clients alike, all based on a holistic view of the JoRTT as a complex organisation of many moving parts that all worked together to provide exemplary service to clients in need of access to Justice.

The technology tools that facilitated the transformation were, in the main, based on Cloud technology. The use of the Internet allowed clients to easily access court services on any internet enabled device, such as mobile phones. This was particularly useful as Trinidad and Tobago has over 100% mobile penetration.   
Therefore, tools like Microsoft Teams, CaseLines, web portals, and such formed the basis of the e-Judiciary strategy.

Overall, the JoRTT underwent a comprehensive strategic re-engineering of the structure, processes, procedures, rules, legislation, culture and technology in order to create and maintain its ability to offer excellent service to its clients in the Covid-19 pandemic. They were successful in the most part because of the previous work done in reconceptualising the Judiciary into a modern, technology supported e-Judiciary. Without that foundation, laid years before, the transformation required by the pandemic would have been much more difficult.

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