

## 10 YEARS OF GMS

Revolutionizing Government Communication in Tanzania



# A Decade of Secure, Efficient, and Unified mailing Systems Across Public Institutions

The project required overcoming a variety of technological hurdles, with security concerns at the forefront. “The data had to be housed in Tanzania,” Benedict Ndomba, the Director General of e-GA, recalls. “We couldn’t allow our information to reside on foreign servers; we needed complete control

It all started with a simple idea: *Why don’t we build a government mailing system, so that every public servant can communicate officially through it?* This question sparked a transformation in the way Tanzania’s public institutions conduct their internal and external correspondence. Before 2014, government emails were decentralized, fragmented, and vulnerable to security threats. Many institutions relied on disposable email systems like Yahoo and Gmail, risking the exposure of sensitive government information. For others, bespoke systems developed by private contractors were expensive to maintain and lacked robust security measures. In response to this growing concern, the e-Government Authority (e-GA) embarked on a journey to create a secure, centralized platform that could be used by all government institutions. Thus, the Government mailing System (GMS) was born. Today, a decade later, GMS is a fundamental part of Tanzania’s public administration, ensuring that government communications are safe, reliable, and efficient.

## The Birth of GMS: From Concept to Reality

The Government mailing System was more than just a technological innovation; it was a response to the growing need for secure communication in the public sector. In the pre-GMS era, sending a document from one government office to another was a slow, tedious process that often involved physical letters. Not only did this delay decision-making, but it also left crucial information at risk of being intercepted or lost.

The launch of GMS in 2014 marked a significant turning point. The system, designed and implemented by Tanzanian ICT experts under e-GA’s guidance, offered a secure platform for exchanging government documents and communications. By hosting the system locally, GMS ensured that sensitive data would remain within the country’s borders, further enhancing its security.

The decision to invest in a centralized government mailing system was not just about improving communication speed but also about protecting the confidentiality of government operations. Before GMS, there were no clear agreements on data storage between government institutions and the contractors who designed their email systems. This lack of transparency made it difficult to ensure the security of government information.

By building the GMS from the ground up, Tanzania ensured complete control over its communications infrastructure. This homegrown solution was a step towards greater sovereignty in the digital age.

## Streamlined Communication and Efficiency Gains

The benefits of GMS have been immense. Over 700 public institutions now use the system, including ministries, public agencies, municipalities, and regional authorities. The once fragmented communication landscape has been replaced by a unified platform that allows for seamless information flow across the entire public sector. Take, for example, the National Board of Accountants and Auditors (NBAA). Before GMS, correspondence between government offices often took days or even weeks to arrive. Today, emails sent through the system reach their destination in seconds, enabling faster decision-making and more efficient operations.

CPA Pius Maneno, Director General of NBAA, recalls the transformation vividly. “We used to rely on physical letters that would take far too long to reach their intended recipients,” he says. “Now, with GMS, communication is instantaneous. We can send important documents and know they’ve been received almost immediately. It’s completely changed how we work.”

This increase in efficiency is not just a matter of convenience—it’s a matter of better governance. Decisions that once took weeks to process can now be made in a fraction of the time, allowing the government to respond more rapidly to pressing issues.

Moreover, the standardized email addresses provided by GMS (e.g., @ega, @costech, @udsm) ensure that recipients can trust the origin of the emails they receive. Every email sent through the system is marked by the institution it comes from, adding an extra layer of authenticity and security.

## Cost Savings and Sustainability

Before the implementation of GMS, many public institutions were forced to rely on contractor-built email systems that were not only expensive but also inefficient. These systems often required constant maintenance, and when something went wrong, the institutions had to pay the contractors to fix the issues.

With GMS, those days are over. The centralized system has saved the Tanzanian government an estimated 85%



Eng. Benedict Ndomba, Director General of e-GA.

of operational costs, as institutions no longer need to purchase and maintain individual email systems. The savings come not just from the reduced need for external contractors but also from the streamlined nature of the system itself. As Benedict Ndomba, Director General of e-GA, explains, “We’ve created a shared infrastructure that reduces redundancy across public institutions. Instead of every ministry or agency developing and maintaining its own system, GMS provides a single, efficient platform for all government communication.” This cost-efficiency has allowed the government to invest more in improving the system, rather than spending money on constant repairs or maintenance of fragmented email infrastructures. It also means that even smaller, regional institutions have access to the same high-level communication tools as larger ministries, leveling the playing field across the public sector.

## Security at the Core

At its heart, GMS was built to prioritize security. In today’s digital landscape, cybersecurity threats are more pervasive than ever, and government institutions are prime targets for hackers seeking to steal sensitive information.

By hosting the GMS locally in Tanzania, e-GA ensured that government communications would not be exposed to foreign servers or external control. This decision has proven crucial in maintaining the confidentiality and integrity of government information.

The system has also been continuously upgraded to keep pace with technological advancements. Since its initial launch as GMS 1.0.0, the platform has evolved through several versions, now standing at GMS 4.0.0. Each upgrade has added new features, improved security protocols, and integrated GMS with other important systems, such as the e-Office platform and the Enterprise Resource Management System (ERMS).

Ricco Boma, Director of ICT Services Management at e-GA, emphasizes the importance of these upgrades. “We are constantly monitoring the system for any vulnerabilities,” he says. “Our goal is to stay ahead of any potential threats. Technology is always changing, and we need to ensure that GMS remains secure and efficient for all its users.” To this end, e-GA has established a 24/7 help desk to provide technical support to all institutions using GMS. This ensures that any issues that arise are resolved quickly and efficiently, preventing any disruption in communication.

## The Human Impact of GMS

While the technical and financial benefits of GMS are clear, its true impact can be seen in the day-to-day lives of the public servants who use it. At COSTECH (Tanzania Commission for Science and Technology), Senior ICT Officer Salumu Ally Kulindwa speaks with pride about the system.

“GMS has transformed how we work,” he says. “It’s not just about faster communication—it’s about knowing that our information is safe. We used to worry about emails being intercepted or lost. Now, we have full confidence in the system’s security.”

This sentiment is echoed across public institutions. The system has not only improved how people work but also how they feel about their work. Knowing that government communications are protected has given public servants peace of mind and increased their confidence in the tools they use.

The collaboration between institutions has also strengthened as a result of GMS. With everyone using the same platform, it has become easier to share information, make decisions, and coordinate efforts across different levels of government.

