

48 million copies of Gacaca files digitized

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A worker searches for Gacaca document at Kacyiru. According to the Ministry of National Unity and Civic Engagement a total number of 48 million copies of gacaca files have been digitized.

The Ministry of National Unity and Civic Engagement has revealed that a total number of 48 million copies of gacaca files have been digitized and now are being indexed to interlink files that have a connection.

While addressing the media on April 5, the permanent secretary in the ministry of National Unity and Civic Engagement Clarisse Munezero said: “*the entire process that began in 2015 is scheduled to be completed in a year or two.*”

She added that first stage of the digitiz-

ing processes has reached in a very promising level and that; “*all gacaca related documents are now available in both hard and soft copies, which means, keeping them properly is now guaranteed.*”

Munezero revealed that the next phase is “*indexing which is about matching corresponding case files.*”

Also the indexing consists of linking each file with identification details including the name of the corresponding defendant, their District, Sector and Cell of origin.

This guarantee that, the digitization of the Gacaca trial records is an important step in preserving Rwanda’s history and ensuring that the atrocities committed during the 1994 genocide are never forgotten.

In 2017, the Government said that the process to scan and digitalise about 63 million copies of Gacaca Courts’ archives – which started in 2015, was expected to have been completed in 2018.

However, it was later realised some of the pages were found blank, hence there was no point in digitalising them – with only about 48 million copies

The digitisation of Gacaca case files keeps

them in soft copies to ensure safe storage and easy access for further usage, such as documenting on the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi in order to fight against its denial, trivialisation and the spread of the Genocide ideology, for research as well as judicial purposes.

The project is carried out in partnership with Aegis Trust, a British non-governmental organisation working to prevent genocide and other mass atrocities worldwide and which has the high expertise in preserving archives.

In February, Minister Jean-Damascene Bizimana said that government working with the Rwanda Information Society (RISA), a public agency in charge of ICT, about a plan to have an offsite backup. This is a means of securing data to a server in a different location than the primary server in an event of a disaster or malicious attacks.

This move, Bizimana said is intended to prevent the loss of such data in case one storage gets damaged as a result of factors such

as fire outbreaks.

In January 2017, it was estimated that the Gacaca Court archive digitisation project would require about Rwf5 billion to complete. But in September of the same year, the budget was revised downwards to around Rwf2.8 billion with the Government attributing that to streamlining the process to cut costs in a manner that does not hinder efficiency.

Gacaca Courts were the community-based Genocide courts. In their 10 years of existence (2002 to 2012), Gacaca Courts tried over 1.9 million cases related to the genocide against the Tutsi, which hugely contributed to the eradication of the culture of impunity and dispensation of justice to the victims, according to information from the Ministry of Justice.

Among those cases, over 1.3 million concerned looted or destroyed properties, while over 638,000 were cases related to crimes committed against persons.