

Towards enhanced public access to legal information: a proposal for official networked one-stop legal information websites

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ABSTRACT

This article identifies the publishing of fragments of legal information on multiple, isolated official legal information websites (OLIWs) as the major factor underlying the existing problems in locating the available official online legal information of all levels of government (national, state, and local). Given this situation, knowledge of the administrative divisions and legal system of a country is often necessary to perform any reliable search for the websites of each legislature, court, government department or agency that contain legal information. Such knowledge usually requires research, which is more demanding should a person wish to know the laws of other countries for transnational academic research, business transactions, migration, tourism, etc. Examination of the OLIWs of the 51 countries included in this study reveals the existence of this problem in both developed and developing countries. As a response, a novel system of official networked one-stop legal information websites ('the ONOLIWs system') is developed in this article, and argued to be the definitive solution to the global problems outlined. The ONOLIWs system guarantees the availability of the whole stock of the legal information of a legislative jurisdiction on one single website (the ONOLIW for that jurisdiction) and also easy accessibility of all the ONOLIWs of a country via an exhaustive index. Therefore, the ONOLIWs system will provide optimum access to the official online legal information of any country, the aggregation of which is seamless access to global legal information. It will thereby promote good knowledge of the law, which has many benefits for individuals, organisations, and the state itself. Governments at all levels, intergovernmental organisations (IGOs) that create legal information, and developers of their OLIWs will benefit immensely from the ONOLIWs concept, its implementation mechanism, and the policy framework proposed in this article.

Keywords: Right of public access to legal information; Official networked one-stop legal information websites; Legal Information Top-Level Domains (gTLDs); Law website design; Legal informatics; ICANN

1. INTRODUCTION

It is difficult, perhaps impossible in some cases, to find all the *available official* online legal information resources of any particular country due to the existing defective system of *official legal information websites* (OLIWs).[2] The problem exists at two levels. First, it exists where there is no one OLIW of a *legislative jurisdiction* that contains the complete stock of all categories[3] of its legal information, and fragments of the legal information are spread across multiple, isolated websites of that jurisdiction. A 'legislative jurisdiction' refers to the administrative area (national, state, or local) over which a particular legislature has the power to make laws (Mitee, 2017a, p. 1438). Second, it also exists where the numerous OLIWs of all the legislative jurisdictions of a particular *country* are isolated, and not interlinked. With reference to the situation in India, as an example of the general trend, Greenleaf, Vivekanandan, Chung, Singh & Mowbray (2011) remarked that 'information on legislation and judicial decisions is scattered and often buried in a maze of websites run by ministries at central, state and territory levels' (p. 296). This two-level problem requires a two-pronged technical solution.

This problem exists in developed and developing countries alike.[4] Even developed countries that are presumed to be technologically advantaged (Wheeler, Thomson, & Perkin, 2006, p. 86), such as the US, UK, Ireland, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand[5] are not immune to it. The problem therefore transcends the digital or technological divide and other global inequalities that usually place developing countries with scarce resources at a disadvantage. This global issue requires an urgent solution because the use of websites for free global dissemination of up-to-date, comprehensive, and user-friendly legal information has become indispensable in the twenty-first century globalised world that is information technology-driven.[6]

The cause of the problem is simply a *poor web development approach* that does not adopt the one-stop access concept, nor does it include integration of all tiers of OLIWs (national, state or regional, and local governments) of a country. It emanates from a lack of proper policy on public access to legal information. This policy gap may also have contributed to the generally poor state of free public access to *official* legal information in many developing countries, in terms of the *availability* of their laws and law-related publications online.[7]

This article therefore aims to examine the use of a network of official one-stop legal information websites as a workable technological tool for enhancing national and global public access to official legal information. The term 'official legal information', which is the focus of this article, refers to all the primary sources of law and all law-related documents produced and published by any government or intergovernmental organisation (IGO), especially on official websites, regardless of their evidential status or authentication; it coincides with the definition of 'public legal information' in the Montreal Declaration on Free Access to Law (2002):

"Public legal information means legal information produced by public bodies that have a duty to produce law and make it public. It includes primary sources of law, such as legislation, case law and treaties, as well as various secondary (interpretative) public sources, such as reports on preparatory work and law reform, and resulting from boards of inquiry. It also includes legal documents created as a result of public funding."

This article contributes to the existing literature in the following ways. First, the *system of official networked one-stop legal information websites* (ONOLIWs)[8] ('ONOLIWs system')[9] that

this article develops is the definitive solution to the existing difficulty in finding fragments of any country's legal information on multiple, unconnected OLIWs. It guarantees the availability of the whole stock of the legal information of a legislative jurisdiction on just one website. In addition to its on-site collections, every ONOLIW contains external links that form an *exhaustive index* of all the ONOLIWs of the country. This will eliminate the current findability^[10] problems that include a required knowledge of a country's administrative structure and its legal system in order to be able to search for all relevant legal information of that country, as revealed by the examination of the OLIWs of the 51 countries included in this study.^[11] Furthermore, this article provides a valuable guide for the appropriate policy framework necessary for implementing the ONOLIWs system.^[12]

Second, this article analyses the different categories of domains that can be used for hosting OLIWs. It recommends the *regulated legal information domains* (RLIDs)^[13] category, which is not yet in existence, as the most advantageous category because it will enhance easy identification of official online repositories of legal information and facilitate access to them (Mitee, 2017b). RLIDs can be available only if the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) creates a new legal information generic Top-Level Domain (gTLD) to be used exclusively for OLIWs, which could be <.officiallaws> as proposed in my recent work (Mitee, 2017b).^[14]

The rest of this article is structured in three sections. Section 2 presents an overview of the provision of online access to legal information. It examines the one-stop access feature of the *national official legal information websites* (NOLIWs)^[15] of 51 countries (six developed and 45 developing countries) and discusses the deficiencies of these NOLIWs. Section 3 develops the ONOLIWs system as the definitive solution to the problem of finding the *available* online legal information of any country, outlines its unique advantages, and suggests how the proposal may be implemented. Section 4 draws the conclusion that the ONOLIWs system as outlined in this article will provide optimum national and global access to the available official online legal information of any country. It also highlights the policy implications of the proposed system for governments at all levels, IGOs that create legal information, and developers of the OLIWs.

2. NETWORKED ONE-STOP ACCESS FEATURE OF NATIONAL OFFICIAL LEGAL INFORMATION WEBSITES

In this section an overview of the provision of online access to legal information is presented and the NOLIWs of 51 countries (six developed and 45 developing countries) are examined in order to determine the accessibility features. These accessibility features are based on the categories^[16] of on-site legal information hosted on each NOLIW and its external links to the other OLIWs of the country. A NOLIW is the official government legal information website at the national level; it contains the first-tier legal information for that country.

2.1 PROVISION OF ONLINE ACCESS TO LEGAL INFORMATION

Every government has the obligation to provide free public access to all categories of its legal information (*Tañada v. Tuvera*, 1985; *Victoria University of Wellington Students Association v. Shearer (Government Printer)*, 1973).^[17] These categories include the primary sources of law (principal legislation, subsidiary legislation, judicial decisions, and the applicable

international and regional legal instruments); bills and other legislative documents; and all other law-related government publications (Mitee, 2017a, p. 1437). The customary law of indigenous communities also deserves such material or documentary access because unwritten customary law is inaccessible (Mitee, 2017a, pp. 1485–1486).^[18]

Adequate public access to legal information promotes good knowledge of the law, which has many benefits for individuals, organisations, and the state itself. For instance, it is necessary in order to justify the application of the doctrine that ignorance of the law is no excuse (Mitee, 2017a, pp. 1463–1466), which is based on the presumption of knowledge of the law (Ingram, 2015, pp. 176–177). This justification has implications for justice and human rights (Mitee, 2017a, pp. 1488–1489). Adequate public access to legal information is also necessary to facilitate sustainable development; enhance law reform; enable national and transnational legal research; and to promote the principles of democracy, including transparency and accountability (Mitee, 2017a, p. 1466–1469).

People have the right to know the laws that govern them. In my recent work (Mitee, 2017a), in which I review the relevant literature^[19] on this right of public access to legal information, I argue that it is an existing legal right (pp. 1437–1451) and that it qualifies for universal recognition as a human right (pp. 1451–1471). Further, I advocate a new United Nations Convention on the Right of Public Access to Legal Information, and discuss the contents of the proposed Convention that are necessary for its drafting (pp. 1473–1489).

Online legal information is the only format that has the *capabilities* for free national and global access, currency of databases, versatility for various uses and users (including persons with disabilities), and optimum searchability, all of which factors enhance the best use and knowledge of the law (Mitee, 2017a, pp. 1473–1476; Mitee, 2017b). The traditional print format lacks those advantages. The global impact of free online legal information is revealed in the following statement by Thomas Bruce (2015), co-founder and director of the Cornell University Legal Information Institute: ‘Today [2015], the web site [LII^[20]] that we built [in 1992] is visited by more than 30 million people each year, from more than 240 countries and territories.’ (p. 1)

Many governments and IGOs worldwide have recognised the indispensability of websites as repositories of their legal information (Arnold-Moore, 2004; Ward, 2016), which is commendable. However, faulty implementation has resulted in a multiplicity of websites that contain fragments of legal information. These websites are developed by the executive departments and agencies, legislatures, and the multitudes of courts of the judiciary of each country’s different levels of government, i.e. national, regional, and local. The publishing of fragments of legal information on these websites has caused considerable difficulties in terms of locating legal information that is already available online (Greenleaf *et al*, 2011, p. 296).^[21] An examination of the national official legal information websites of particular countries is necessary in order to assess the extent of this problem of publishing a country’s stock of legal information on multiple isolated websites.

2.2 CRITERIA FOR NETWORKED ONE-STOP ACCESS FEATURE

In order to evaluate the NOLIWs of the countries selected for this study, I have devised the ‘*networked one-stop access feature*’ (NOSAF)^[22] that consists of a pair of criteria: (1) the NOLIW contains the complete stock of *all categories* of the country’s national legal information; and (2) it has exhaustive *external links* to the OLIWs of all the states or regions (second-tier OLIWs) and all the OLIWs of all the local governments (third-tier OLIWs) of the country. Any

NOLIW that is found to satisfy *both* criteria is considered to have the networked one-stop access feature.

The named criteria are major determinants of the ease with which people can find and access *all* the available online legal information resources of a country from any of its NOLIWs. Focussing on NOLIWs is important because a NOLIW naturally serves as the primary gateway to the official legal information resources of the whole country. One of the reasons is that the name of a country is much more prominent than that of any of its constituent administrative divisions (states and local government councils). This advantage makes it more likely for a NOLIW to attract more online visitors and thereby rank higher in Internet search engine results (Michigan Technological University, n.d.). Therefore, examining the networked one-stop access feature of NOLIWs will provide valuable insights into the existing problem of finding all of the legal information of a country.

Peter Morville helped to develop the concept of *findability*. He appropriately defines 'findability' as the 'quality of being locatable or navigable', the 'degree to which a particular object is easy to discover or locate', and the 'degree to which a system or environment supports navigation and retrieval' (Morville, 2005, p. 4). In this discussion, it simply refers to the ease with which official online legal information can be found on the Web. Findability is of immense importance because the Web is a gigantic virtual world that contains more than one billion websites (Netcraft, 2017) and billions of pieces of information (Patel & Bhatt, 2014, pp. 168-170).

2.3 CRITERIA FOR SELECTION OF COUNTRIES

There are two related factors applied as selection criteria for each of the countries included in this brief study: (1) English language is the official language of the country, or one of a number; and (2) the country's online legal information is officially published by the government in the English language. The choice of English-speaking countries was made to avoid the problem of translation of legal information on the basis of my understanding of English and no other foreign language, and to avoid hiring bi- or multi-lingual personnel, which would be beyond the resources and time available for this research. Although the technology for instant translation of webpages now exists, e.g. Google's instant translation (Google, n.d.-a; Google, n.d.-b), its use is limited because such translations lack the reliability that is required for the integrity of any online resource, including legal information. Therefore, I do not consider it an option. The choice of the countries included is sufficient for the current exercise, the aim of which is simply to assess the situation in *some* countries. It does not intend to investigate any possible differences due, for example, to language or legal traditions (e.g. common law, civil law, or religious law).

The selection of every country that satisfies the two criteria stated above produces a 100 per cent sample size, which means that the study aims to examine the situation in all the countries of the world where the official legal information is in the English language. The list of the 60 countries^[23] that meet both criteria, and are therefore selected, is based on information from the following websites: United Kingdom Government (2017), Worldatlas (n.d.), and North Carolina State University (n.d.). Of the total 60 countries, I could not find what may be regarded as the NOLIWs for the national *legislation* of nine developing countries.^[24] The 51 countries examined are grouped under *developed countries* (six) and *developing countries* (45) based on the 2017 classification of countries by the United Nations (2017, pp. 153-154). This grouping may provide comparative insights into the nature of the problem.

2.4 A BRIEF EXAMINATION OF THE SITUATION IN ALL THE SIX ENGLISH-SPEAKING DEVELOPED COUNTRIES[25]

All the six English-speaking developed countries are selected for this brief study. They are: the US, the UK (comprising England, Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland as its four constituent countries), Ireland, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. The criteria for selection are outlined in Section 2.3 above. It is significant that these countries are all technologically advanced democracies that value the rule of law and open government based on access to public information, which includes legal information. They have all the technical expertise and financial resources required to develop online legal information websites with the best features and capabilities. I used the Google search engine (see Section 2.6 below) to search for the NOLIWs of these countries. The summary of the findings is presented below.

2.4.1 UNITED STATES

Govinfo (United States Government Publishing Office, 2016), launched in February 2016, is the new official one-stop website for information from the three branches (executive, legislature, and judiciary) of the US federal government.[26] Govinfo, in its beta version until 2018,[27] is in the process of replacing the Federal Digital System (FDsys) public website. Govinfo contains federal legislation (Congressional Bills, Public and Private Laws, Statutes at Large, the US Code, regulations),[28] international legal instruments, administrative memoranda, and US Courts Opinions from *selected* US appellate, district, and bankruptcy courts.[29]

There are more than 100 federal courts below the Supreme Court in the US (United States Courts, n.d.). Each of these courts publishes its decisions on its own separate website which is a subdomain of the United States Courts website,[30] e.g. the US Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit.[31] The US Supreme Court publishes its opinions on its website.[32] Govinfo, the Supreme Court website, and the United States Courts website (the country's three main NOLIWs) are not properly interlinked. Govinfo does not have links to all the OLIWs of the fifty states of America, nor to any of those of the thousands of local governments (United States Census Bureau, 2012) that have law-making powers.

The Cornell University Legal Information Institute (LII) website contains a *third-party unofficial* version of some US federal laws and links to the laws of the different states. Its conditions of use include the following: 'The LII compilations aim to provide useful information. [. . .] neither the LII nor Cornell warrants that the information is complete or accurate. Both disclaim all liability to any person for any loss caused by errors or omissions in this collection of information.'[33]

2.4.2 UNITED KINGDOM

Legislation.gov.uk[34] is the official legislation website of the UK. It contains primary legislation (Acts) and secondary legislation (subsidiary instruments or regulations). It has internal links to the legislation databases of Scotland,[35] Wales,[36] and Northern Ireland[37] and external links to the Scottish Parliament Bills[38] and other parliamentary documents, National Assembly for Wales legislation,[39] and Northern Ireland Assembly Bills and statutory rules.[40]

Legislation.gov.uk has no *conspicuous* navigation-menu reciprocal link (but obscure text links do exist) to the UK Parliament website (parliament.uk) that contains UK Bills and other

legislative documents. In addition, it has no link to the judgments of the UK courts. The judgments of some UK courts are available on the Court and Tribunals Judiciary website,^[41] which has no link to the UK legislation website, nor to the judgments of the courts of Scotland^[42] or Northern Ireland.^[43] The websites of the Supreme Court^[44] and the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council,^[45] which are linked only to each other, contain their own judgments. The legislation.gov.uk website has no link to any of the bylaws of the hundreds of councils with law-making powers in the UK (United Kingdom Government, n.d.-a).^[46]

The *third-party* BAILII website^[47] contains a significant proportion of the *unofficial* UK legal information that many people rely on (Institute of Advanced Legal Studies, 2016). For example, the official UK Parliament website refers its visitors to BAILII for some court decisions.^[48] BAILII's disclaimer warns that 'BAILII does not invite reliance upon, nor accept responsibility for, the information it provides. [. . .] Users should confirm information from another source if it is of sufficient importance for them to do so.'^[49]

2.4.3 IRELAND

The Electronic Irish Statute Book (EISB)^[50] contains the English version of the official legislation of Ireland: Acts of the Oireachtas^[51] and Statutory Instruments.^[52] Its Irish version is *Achtanna an Oireachtais*.^[53] EISB has external links to Bills, other legislative documents, and some recent legislation (Acts) on the Houses of the Oireachtas (Irish Parliament) website,^[54] and to EUR-Lex (European Union Law) website.^[55]

The Courts of Service (CoS) website^[56] contains judgments of the Supreme Court, High Court, District Court, Courts-Martial Appeal Court, Court of Criminal Appeal, Court of Appeal, Circuit Court, and Central Criminal Court. EISB has no link to CoS and *vice versa*. There could not have been external links to lower tiers of OLIWs because Ireland's municipalities, county councils, city councils, regional authorities, and regional assemblies do not have the power to make laws. That is the reason the country's centralised system of government with only one tier of legislature remains a cause for concern to the European Union (Council of Europe, 2013).

Similar to the situation in the UK, the *third-party* BAILII website^[57] contains a significant proportion of the *unofficial* version of Irish legal information, arranged as follows: Ireland case law, Irish legislation, and other Irish materials (Irish Law Reform Commission papers and reports and Irish treaty library).

2.4.4 CANADA

The Justice Laws Website (JLW) is the English version of the official legislation database of Canada.^[58] The French version is *Site Web de la Législation (Justice)*.^[59] JLW contains the Consolidated Acts, Consolidated Regulations, and Annual Statutes of Canada. Its Canadian System of Justice: Links to Resources webpage^[60] contains links to the external websites of the following: the Canadian Legal Information Institute (CanLII), the 13 Provincial and Territorial Departments of Justice/ Attorney-General, Federal Courts, Provincial Courts, and Council of Canadian Administrative Tribunals. All of these have their individual legal information resources, e.g. Supreme Court Judgments.^[61]

JLW also has links to Bills on the Parliament of Canada's LEGISinfo database^[62] and to the government website of Canada, which contains links to Laws and Regulations by Department

or Agency, International Treaties, and Treaties with Indigenous Peoples.^[63] There is no link to any of the legal information websites of Canada's numerous municipal governments.^[64]

The *third-party* Canadian Legal Information Institute (CanLII) website contains an *unofficial* version of Canada's legal information. Its disclaimer states: 'CanLII, Lexum and the CanLII website's partners provide no warranty and make no claims as to the reliability, accuracy or integrity of the website's content or functioning.'^[65]

2.4.5 AUSTRALIA

The Federal Register of Legislation^[66] (FRL) is Australia's official legislation website. It contains Acts, Bills, legislative instruments, notifiable instruments, administrative arrangements orders, Norfolk Island legislation, and prerogative instruments. Norfolk Island is one of the dependent areas of Australia. Australia has six states, two territories, and six dependent areas (Central Intelligence Agency, 2013).

The four principal federal courts of Australia (PFCAs) have their separate websites: High Court of Australia (HCA), Federal Court of Australia (FCA), Family Court of Australia (FCoA), and Federal Circuit Court of Australia (FCCA). They are not linked to one another. FCoA, FCA, and FCCA share a joint portal just for access to cases before them.^[67] Apart from Norfolk Island mentioned above, neither the FRL nor any of the PFCAs has links to the OLIWs of states, territories, and dependent areas. Similarly, no link exists to any OLIW of the hundreds of Australia's local governments^[68] that have law-making powers, e.g. those of Queensland (Queensland Government, 2015).

The *third-party* Australasian Legal Information Institute (AustLII) website^[69] contains an *unofficial* version of Australian legal information that many people rely on. AustLII's disclaimer states: 'AustLII does not invite reliance upon, nor accept responsibility for, the information it provides. [. . .] Users should confirm information from another source if it is of sufficient importance for them to do so.'^[70]

2.4.6 NEW ZEALAND

The New Zealand Legislation (NZL) website^[71] contains Acts, Bills, legislative instruments, other instruments, and supplementary order papers.^[72] It has links to the Ministry of Justice Judicial Decisions Online (JDO).^[73] JDO has external links to the Courts of New Zealand (CNZ);^[74] Decisions Finder;^[75] and Courts Finder.^[76] NZL and CNZ have no links to any OLIW of the regions and territory of New Zealand, nor to any of the country's 78 local governments,^[77] e.g. Auckland Council website that contains its regulations and bylaws.^[78]

JDO has links to the *third-party* New Zealand Legal Information Institute (NZLII) website that contains several *unofficial* databases of New Zealand legal information, e.g. Supreme Court of New Zealand judgments.^[79] NZLII states: 'NZLII does not invite reliance upon, nor accept responsibility for, the information it provides. [. . .] Users should confirm information from another source if it is of sufficient importance for them to do so.'^[80]

2.4.7 GENERAL REMARKS

Having outlined the findings on each of the six developed countries examined, it is important to add some general remarks on them – two here and the remainder in Section 2.6 below. First, only the US Govinfo NOLIW has all the specified categories^[81] of national (federal) legal information, albeit some categories are not comprehensive, e.g. court decisions. Govinfo

contains only *selected* decisions of just a few of the more than 100 US federal courts whose decisions are hosted on the US Courts website. The US Supreme Court also hosts its decisions on its website. Therefore, Govinfo is not a complete one-stop NOLIW, based on the first criterion in Section 2.2 above. Only the NOLIW (legislation) of Canada has links to all of Canada's second-tier OLIWs. No NOLIW of any of the countries has a link to their third-tier OLIWs of local government councils. Therefore, they all lack the *networked one-stop access feature* because they do not satisfy the twin criteria outlined in Section 2.2 above.

Second, each of the countries has a Legal Information Institute which is a *third-party* non-governmental organisation that publishes some of the country's *unofficial* legal information online. Although their services are significant, the provision of public access to legal information is a legal and moral duty of every government (Arnold-Moore, 2004; Ward, 2016; Mitee, 2017a, pp. 1445–1449). No government should rely on a *third-party* website for access to any aspect of its own legal information (Mitee, 2017a, pp. 1446–1447). This article focuses on legal information on official websites owned by governments and IGOs.

2.5 A SUMMARY OF THE SITUATION IN 45 ENGLISH-SPEAKING DEVELOPING COUNTRIES^[82]

The Appendix to this article contains the list of the 45 English-speaking developing countries selected for this brief study. The selection criteria for these countries are discussed in Section 2.3 above. I used the Google Internet search engine (see Section 2.6 below) to search for the NOLIWs that contain *legislation*, which I refer to as *official national legislation websites* (ONLWs).^[83] A summary of the findings is presented below.

Some ONLWs of the 45 countries are dedicated legal information websites (e.g. Trinidad and Tobago^[84]) while the others are on the websites of the legislature (e.g. Solomon Islands^[85]), the Attorney-General (e.g. Mauritius^[86]), law reform commission (e.g. Tanzania^[87]), and the Ministry of Justice (e.g. Jamaica^[88]). I use the term 'ONLW' in this context in a *broad* sense to refer to the *main* government-owned website (that I could find) which contains *some* national legislation, without regard to its comprehensiveness nor the *basic* technical features of a proper legal information database, e.g. advanced arrangement and categorisation of resources, advanced search functionality, and the requisite document formats. For example, Nigeria,^[89] Papua New Guinea,^[90] and Tanzania^[91] have merely an insignificant official collection of national legislation on their websites. This assessment is based on the range of years covered. The Nigerian collection, for instance, is from 1999, while Nigeria's legislation in force spans more than a century from 1914 when the Protectorates of Southern and Northern Nigeria were amalgamated to form one country under British rule (Orimolade & Iwu, 2016, p. 46).

No ONLW of any of the 45 countries has databases of all categories^[92] of legal information on a single website, but Kenya Law website^[93] has an impressive number of the categories. It contains legislation, court decisions, international legal instruments, bills, parliamentary debates (Hansard), and some legal notices. The website also contains an online version of The Kenya Gazette. None of the ONLWs has links to all their second- and third-tier OLIWs. Therefore, they all lack the *networked one-stop access feature* proposed in Section 2.2 above.

There are websites of legal information institutes in some of the 45 developing countries that contain *third-party unofficial* legal information of those countries, e.g. Seychelles Legal Information Institute (SeyLII)^[94] and Southern African Legal Information Institute (SAFLII).^[95] The Law Reporting department of the Judiciary of Uganda publishes Ugandan

legal information on the Uganda Legal Information Institute (ULII) website^[96] instead of publishing it on a Uganda government-owned website. The parliament website of Vanuatu contains only links to the country's legal information on the Pacific Islands Legal Information Institute (PACLI) website.^[97] I remarked above (Section 2.4.7) that it is improper for the government of any country to rely on the databases of legal information institutes. Any government that abdicates, to any third party whatsoever, its legal and moral duty to provide free and adequate public access to its legal information, denies its people their right to a vital public service.

2.6 CONCLUSION

As a legal professional and researcher, I had considerable difficulty in finding all the various OLIWs of the countries studied. The exercise involved numerous Internet *searches* via Google, which is the world's dominant Internet search engine (Vanberg & Ünver, 2017, p. 11; StatCounter Global Stats, 2017; Netmarketshare, 2017). There were instances when I had to research a country's *administrative structure* (using the country's official sources and *The World Factbook*^[98]) to establish the number and names of the constituent states (regions or provinces) and local governments in order to be able to search for their respective OLIWs. I also had to research a country's *legal system* on several occasions to know the different legislatures and courts to be able to search for their OLIWs. Finding information on a country's administrative structure and legal system from *reliable* online sources is itself another problem. The implication is that the general public who need to know the law that regulates their conduct and activities, ignorance of which is no excuse (Mitee, 2017a, pp. 1463–1466), are bound to have much greater difficulty in finding their country's numerous OLIWs. It is even worse in the case of those who want to find the OLIWs of other countries. The ease with which a person can find the legal information of other countries is vital because legal information is for the whole world for the purposes of global legal research, transactions, business operations, migration, tourism, etc. (Mitee, 2017a, p. 1445).

The difficulty as outlined reveals the inadequacy of the existing system of organising and linking the official online legal information resources of a country. In such a situation, it may sometimes be impossible for people to find all the OLIWs of a country due to the imperfection of Internet search engines and the factors that determine the reliability of their results, e.g. the requisite search skills (Popkoff, n.d.; Wood *et al*, 2016; Mitee, 2017b). In fact, the higher the number of administrative divisions of a country that create legal information, the harder the problem of finding their laws online. This reality may explain my inability to locate the OLIWs of nine English-speaking developing countries in the course of this study, if in fact they do exist.

Apart from the US Govinfo, the NOLIW of Kenya (a developing country in Africa), contains more categories^[99] of on-site legal information than those of all the other 49 countries examined. These include the other five English-speaking developed countries: UK, Canada, Ireland, Australia, and New Zealand. No NOLIW of any of the 51 countries has external links to the OLIWs of all the states (regions or provinces) and local governments of the country. Therefore, they all lack the *networked one-stop access feature* (based on the twin criteria discussed in Section 2.2 above) that is necessary for public access to the whole stock of any country's *available* online legal information. The similarity between the developed and developing countries regarding the lack of the networked one-stop access feature means the problem has no relationship with the digital or technological divide, at least in the case of these 51 countries.

However, it is in the *availability* (quantity) of online legal information and the *quality of the databases* due to the application of modern legal information systems, where there lies a stark difference between the six developed and 45 developing countries studied, and this is in favour of the developed countries. For instance, the resources on some of the NOLIW of the developing countries are so scanty that they cannot properly be called ‘legal information websites’, e.g. those of Nigeria (Mitee, 2017a, p. 1434), Papua New Guinea, and Tanzania (Mitee, 2017b).^[100] Some of the laws of these countries are mere poorly scanned PDF copies of the print version, e.g. those of Nigeria. Anguilla and the Cayman Islands are examples of countries that do not provide free online access at all. Anguilla’s OLIW is only for the sale of both print and electronic versions of its laws instead of publishing them online to provide free public access (Mitee, 2017b).^[101] Access to the online laws of the Cayman Islands is by paid subscription.^[102]

From the findings above, the problem of inadequate public access to all the *available* official online legal information resources of any country, as caused by the existence of fragments of these resources on multiple isolated OLIWs, exists in all the 51 countries studied, but to varying degrees. It therefore transcends the digital or technological divide and other global inequalities that usually place developing countries with scarce resources at a disadvantage. From the number of countries studied, their different continents, and their development status (developed and developing), this problem has a global dimension. Its cause is simply a poor global web development approach that does not incorporate the one-stop access concept nor the integration of all the OLIWs of a country. These defects may be linked to the lack of proper policy on public access to legal information. The web development concept and policy solution to this problem are discussed in Section 3 below.

3. THE PROPOSAL FOR OFFICIAL NETWORKED ONE-STOP LEGAL INFORMATION WEBSITES

The proposal for the solution to the problem of inadequate public access to the whole stock of any country’s available official online legal information due to its poor organisation, as revealed by the findings in the foregoing Section 2, is discussed below. The implementation and policy framework for the proposal are also examined.

3.1 THE PROPOSAL

To address the problem discussed in Section 2 above, I now develop and advocate adoption of the ‘*system of official networked one-stop legal information websites*’ (the ‘ONOLIWs system’)^[103] as the definitive solution to the global difficulty in finding the different categories^[104] and fragments of any country’s legal information on multiple unconnected OLIWs. I define an ‘*official networked one-stop legal information website*’ (ONOLIW)^[105] as the ‘official legal information website of any government (national, state, or local) which contains the complete stock of all categories of that government’s legal information on-site^[106] and an exhaustive index of all official legal information websites of that country.’ An ONOLIW has the ‘*networked one-stop access feature*’ (NOSAF)^[107] that guarantees maximum findability of and optimum access to the whole stock of any country’s *available* official online legal information. The ONOLIW system builds upon the existing concept of one-stop access websites.

A one-stop access website allows someone to find with greatest ease all categories of any required information in the same place, some of which may be from different external sources,

e.g. the European Competition Network website^[108] (European Commission, 3 April 2006). It is not always feasible to host every database or resource *on-site*. The use of *external links* to *off-site* resources on other relevant websites enhances one-stop access in situations where it will be cumbersome, unnecessarily bureaucratic, technically inadvisable, or organisationally inexpedient to host such information on the same website.

Europa, the European Union's official one-stop website (Hoppmann, 2010, p. 169), launched in February 1995 (European Union, 21 June 2017), is one of the oldest examples of a one-stop website. It has been rightly described as 'one of the most information-heavy websites in the world' (Euractiv, 14 July 2009).

Some governments are now realising the importance of one-stop access websites as the best method of providing public access to their huge, diverse official information resources. That is the rationale behind the award-winning Gov.uk website ('Gov.uk Wins Design of the Year Award', 2013), into which '[t]he websites of all government departments and many other agencies and public bodies [were] merged. . .' (United Kingdom Government, n.d.-b). Griff Rhys Jones, who was one of the Design of the Year jury members, remarked about Gov.uk that it 'creates a benchmark for which all international government websites can be judged on' ('Gov.uk Wins Design of the Year Award', 2013). The Guardian referred to Gov.uk as 'a *one-stop* [emphasis added] digital shop for all government services and information' ("Direct and Well-Mannered" Government Website', 2013).

A few years later (in February 2016^[109]), the US government launched its one-stop Govinfo website that contains federal information from its three arms of government, i.e. executive, legislature, and judiciary (United States Government Publishing Office, n.d.). EUR-Lex^[110] is an excellent example of the application of the concept of one-stop access website to *regional* legal information. It provides free public access, in all the 24 official languages of the European Union, to all categories of European Union law.^[111]

From its description above, the ONOLIW system goes beyond the present concept of one-stop access websites. It adapts the one-stop concept to create one ONOLIW for the national government, one for each state or regional government, and one for each local government, and goes further to create an exhaustive network of all these ONOLIWs via external links. This way, each ONOLIW functions like a mega website for all the ONOLIWs of the country.

3.1.1 DOMAIN NAMES AND OFFICIAL NETWORKED ONE-STOP LEGAL INFORMATION WEBSITES

The ONOLIW system requires that every national, state (regional or provincial), and local government should have one, and only one, ONOLIW that will create a one-stop complete collection of all categories^[112] of its legal information, each of which is hosted with the *same* (second-level) domain name. One-stop websites use *single* domains (Lazo, 1 November 2013) to host its on-site resources. There are two existing categories of domains that governments use for hosting their OLIWs in the world today: shared and dedicated legal information domains.

Shared legal information domains (SLIDs)^[113] are used for hosting legal information databases on a general website that contains other resources that are not part of those databases nor inextricably connected to them. Obvious examples include India's treaties database on the website of the Ministry of External Affairs^[114] and the US' federal legal information databases on its Govinfo website.^[115] Govinfo contains resources from the three branches of the federal government (executive, legislature, and judiciary). SLIDs even extend subtly to

situations where those other resources are law-related, e.g. the websites of the Attorney-General,^[116] the Ministry of Justice,^[117] and even the legislature (e.g. Solomon Islands^[118]), as I explain under the dedicated category below. The public-access implication of SLIDs depends on the relevance and importance of the other resources hosted together which determine the volume of online traffic (visitors) to the website.

One disadvantage of SLID-websites is the possible difficulty in navigating the legal information component, which depends on the web design approach. Another disadvantage is that their *second-level domains* (SLDs) do not usually give people any identification clue about their legal information resources, e.g. *govinfo* in the US government <www.govinfo.gov> website. Further, EUR-Lex,^[119] the European Union official legal information SLID-website, uses <www.eur-lex.europa.eu> that contains *eur-lex*, a subdomain (third-level domain). 'Law' is more generally known than the Latin, 'lex' and 'European' or 'Europe' is more popular than *Europa*. Therefore, an easy-to-recognise SLD, such as <www.europeanlaw.eu> would have been more appropriate, as discussed in the next category below. In addition, the use of *hyphens* in domain names is inadvisable. It makes it difficult for people to remember them correctly (e.g. when a domain name was seen in print or heard), which is bad for direct URL access (Website.com, n.d.; Bangani, 2014). It may also have a negative impact on search engine optimisation (SEO) (Bennett, 2012).

Dedicated legal information domains (DLIDs)^[120] are domains used for websites that contain only legal information. The SLDs of DLIDs usually contain relevant keywords that help people identify them easily as legal information websites, e.g. <www.legislation.uk> (UK legislation) and <www.kenyalaw.org> (Kenyan legal information). Such an identification feature may *induce* online users who are searching for relevant, reliable legal information to access DLID-websites. Dedicated OLIWs should be *neutral*, i.e. not part of any website that also hosts other resources from any of the three branches of government, including the website of the legislature. The reason for this is because the executive and judiciary also create other categories of legal information.

Regulated legal information domains (RLIDs)^[121] form the third category of domain names that could be used for hosting official online legal information databases, but they are not yet in existence. RLIDs can only be available for use if the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN)^[122] creates a *generic Top-Level Domain* (gTLD) that is reserved only for OLIWs. ICANN requires any organisation that desires to operate a new gTLD to apply for it whenever it (ICANN) embarks on an application round (Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers, 2011, p. 1). The latest application round began in 2012, and all pending applications are expected to have been concluded by the end of 2017 (Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers, 2016, p. 10).

Regulated gTLDs help people to identify official, authentic, and genuine online information, products, and institutions (Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers, n.d.; Nazzaro, 2014, p. 48). Examples of such existing gTLDs include <.health>, <.organic>, <.physio>, and <.edu>. In my recent work, *Enhancing Public Access to Legal Information: A Proposal for a New Official Legal Information Generic Top-Level Domain* (Mitee, 2017b) which is complementary to this article, I suggest <.officiallaws> as the appropriate regulated legal information gTLD for OLIWs. The proposed <.officiallaws> gTLD is essential for creating RLIDs that will facilitate easy global identification of reliable official online legal information and enhance worldwide public access to OLIWs (Mitee, 2017b). RLIDs will therefore be the most advantageous category of domains for ONOLIWs.

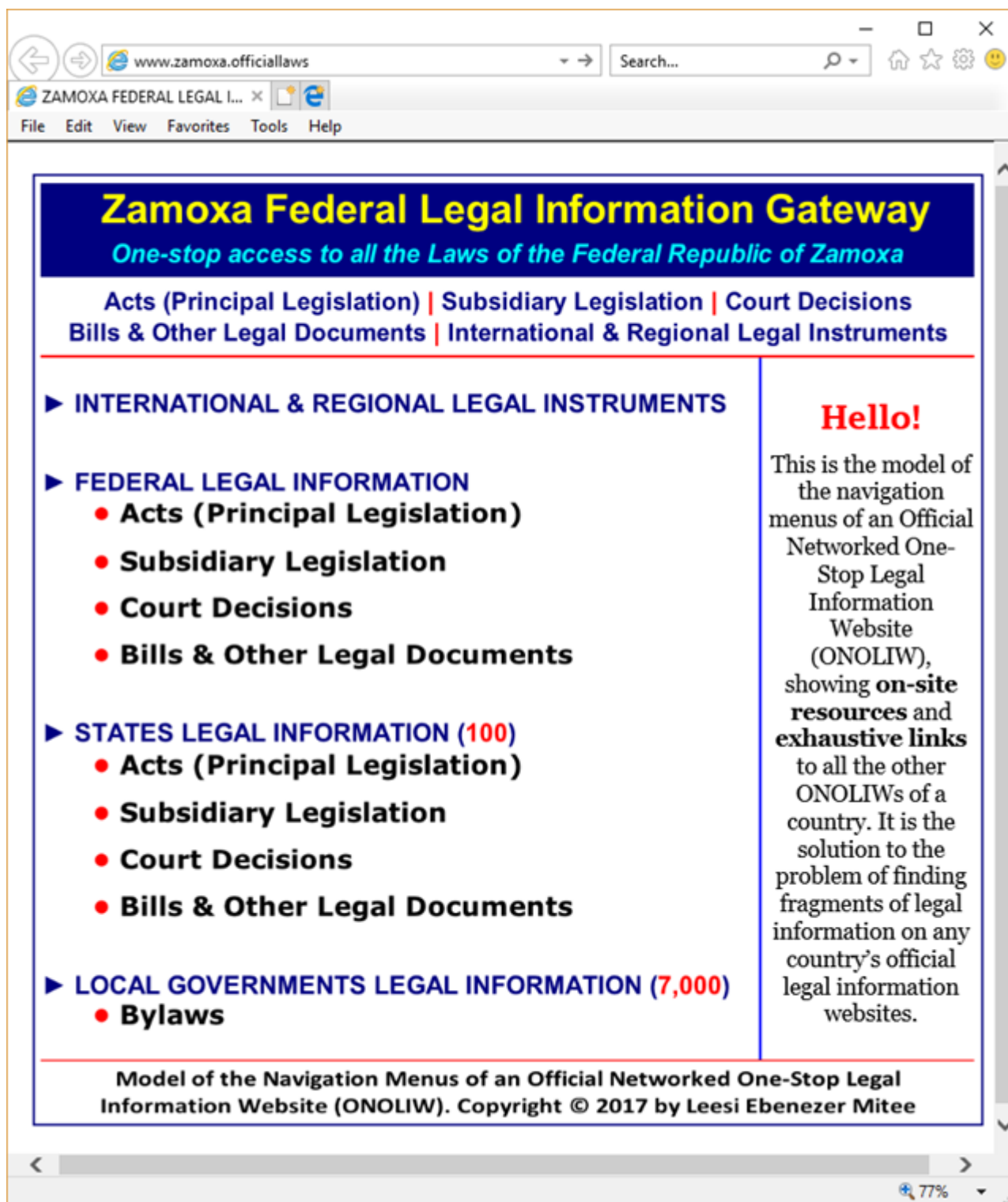
A SLD with the proposed <.officiallaws> gTLD (Mitee, 2017b) can be used to illustrate the ONOLIWs system. Assuming that the domain name of the US federal ONOLIW is <www.us.officiallaws>, the concept of ONOLIWs can be implemented easily using a *subdomain*, which is a *third-level domain*, for each category^[123] or source of its legal information. For example, the subdomains of the United States Code, Congressional Bills, and Supreme Court decisions would be <www.**uscode**.us.officiallaws>, <www.**bills**.us.officiallaws>, and <www.**sc**.us.officiallaws>, respectively. A different team of experts could manage each subdomain-OLIW (for each category of legal information, e.g. legislation) or several subdomain-OLIWs. For example, the European Commission's websites that are a part of the official one-stop website of the European Union 'are developed by its various departments' (European Commission, 4 January 2017). Such arrangement facilitates delegation of responsibilities and decentralisation of management functions (Shapiro, 2008, pp. 207–208), which improves efficiency (Nzimakwe & Pillay, 2014; Mohammed, North, and Ashton, 2016).

Subdomains are usually short, and therefore it is much easier to remember their URLs for *direct access* without the use of an Internet search engine. The world's leading technology companies with unbelievably vast online resources use the same concept of subdomains seamlessly for their various products and services. Examples include Apple (e.g. <https://support.apple.com>); Google (e.g. <https://scholar.google.com>, <https://books.google.com>, <https://mail.google.com>); Facebook (e.g. <https://developers.facebook.com>); and Microsoft (e.g. <https://support.microsoft.com>, <https://answers.microsoft.com>). The United States Courts website (<http://www.uscourts.gov/>) is the classic example of the use of subdomains for legal information from diverse sources (here, the different courts total more than 100).

3.1.2 MODEL OF THE NAVIGATION MENUS OF AN OFFICIAL NETWORKED ONE-STOP LEGAL INFORMATION WEBSITE

The Figure below shows the screenshot of the model of the navigation menus of a typical ONOLIW, previewed in Microsoft Edge Web browser.^[124] The Federal Republic of Zamoxa is a hypothetical country that has a federal government, 100 states, and 7,000 local government councils, all of which create legal information (three tiers).

Figure: Screenshot of the model of the navigation menus of an Official Networked One-Stop Legal Information Website (ONOLIW). Copyright © 2017 by the author, Leesi Ebenezer Mitee



The model illustrates how the ONOLIW system can provide optimum access to a country's entire stock of online legal information, irrespective of the complexity of its administrative structure and legal system. The top navigation menu contains links to all categories^[125] of legal information of the particular legislative jurisdiction (in this case, national) that are hosted on the website (on-site). The left-side navigation menu contains *conspicuous* links to all the

ONOLIWs of the country (national, state, and local). This structure guarantees the required *networked one-stop access feature* of all ONOLIWs (discussed in Section 2.2 above) and provides the best possible access to the available official online legal information of every country, the aggregation of which is a seamless global access.

3.2 THE UNIQUE ADVANTAGES OF OFFICIAL NETWORKED ONE-STOP LEGAL INFORMATION WEBSITES

The ONOLIWs system has some unique advantages. First, it guarantees that, from any relevant search engine results page (SERP) or via direct access, any person can easily find an ONOLIW of any country. That ONOLIW will contain all categories^[126] of the legal information of the *legislative jurisdiction* (defined in Section 1 above) that owns it, which may be the national government, a state (regional or provincial) government, or a local government. The one-stop access feature makes it possible for people to find any available official online legal information of that jurisdiction with the greatest ease.

Second, every ONOLIW of any country provides optimum access to the whole stock of that country's available online legal information via its external links that form an *exhaustive index* of the country's ONOLIWs. This unique capability solves the present problem of performing numerous Internet searches for the different OLIWs of a country, with no guarantee of success (as I explained above in Section 2.6). In addition, under the existing system, it is often necessary to know or research the *administrative structure* of a country and its *legal system* in order to be able to search for all of that country's legal information on the various isolated OLIWs; this is a tedious and time-consuming exercise in itself, which is eliminated entirely by the ONOLIW system. This is particularly significant because the users of legal information include members of the international community who may not be familiar with the administrative structure of a country and its legal system, and searching for reliable official information of another country is usually a difficult task (Brazier and Harvey, 2017).

Third, it is easier and cheaper, technically and financially, to manage one ONOLIW than a multiplicity of OLIWs under the existing system whereby each category of legal information or each unit under a category (e.g. the OLIW of each of the numerous courts under the *judicial decisions* category) is usually managed separately. The ONOLIW system allows the number of subdomain-OLIWs that are managed separately to be reduced. The use of only one second-level domain for all the subdomain-OLIWs of each ONOLIW (discussed in Section 3.1.1 above) will save whatever would have been the cost of buying all the different domain names and their perpetual annual renewal.

Fourth, the popularity of ONOLIWs due to their networked one-stop access feature will reduce the rate of use of third-party unofficial online legal information that may be obsolete, incomprehensive, or inaccurate (Mann, 2012, pp. 81–82), an example of which is Nigeria-law.org website^[127] (Mitee, 2017b). Legal information is extremely dynamic due to the large volume of new laws, frequent amendment and repeal of existing laws, reversal of court decisions on appeal, changes in administrative policies and regulations, etc. This inherent characteristic of law poses a challenge to achieving up-to-date and reliable online legal information. Third-party, free-access providers of unofficial legal information are usually in a much worse situation due to many constraints of funds, technology, and expertise. Some of them also have the problem of inaccurate digitisation of print documents (Mitee, 2017b).

3.3 IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROPOSAL FOR OFFICIAL NETWORKED ONE-STOP LEGAL INFORMATION WEBSITES

Every government can implement the ONOLIWs system described in Section 3.1 above because it is simply a web development concept. It is technically feasible to host the whole stock of the legal information of a *legislative jurisdiction* (defined in Section 1 above) on one, and only one, ONOLIW to provide *on-site* one-stop access, and to interlink all ONOLIWs of a country. The example of the World Legal Information Institute (WorldLII), arguably the world's largest law-specific online catalogue and facility for free legal research (Greenleaf, 2010; Danner and Winterton, 2016, p. 208), validates this claim. WorldLII contains links to over 15,000 law-related websites in all the countries of the world (World Legal Information Institute, n.d.; Greenleaf, 2010)[128] and hosts several legal information databases on its website. In addition, it has connection to 1,829 databases from 123 jurisdictions through 14 legal information institutes.[129]

The solution to the problem of multiple unconnected OLIWs lies in formulating and implementing the proper policy on the design standards for the OLIWs of every country. The policy should incorporate the ONOLIWs system proposed in this article. It should also make it mandatory for each state and each local government to submit the details of its ONOLIW (including its title and URL) to a designated national office responsible for preparing an *exhaustive index of all the ONOLIWs of the country*. The online version of this index should be placed only on the *national* ONOLIW so that all the other ONOLIWs can simply provide a *conspicuous link* to it on their main navigation menus, and any updating will simply be done at its national source. Similar policies can be made at the regional and international levels to strengthen the national policies.

As a web development concept, the *additional* cost implication of the ONOLIWs system is minimal. Every government has the legal and moral duty to provide free and adequate public access to its legal information (Arnold-Moore, 2004; Ward, 2016; Mitee, 2017a; Mitee, 2017b). The cost of performing this duty is one of the inevitable and inherent costs of democracy (McMahon, 1999). Any government that cannot digitise its laws (starting with those in force) and publish them on its official website with free access, for the benefit of its citizens who are bound to obey them, is not fit to govern.[130] The reason is that the cost of providing such free online access to legal information is minimal and affordable. Such a government lacks the legal and moral authority to demand compliance to its *unknowable* laws because such demand amounts to grave injustice and reckless violation of the people's right to know the laws they are bound to obey, ignorance of which is no excuse for contravention (*Rex v. Bailey*, 1800; *United States v. Casson*, 1970; Matthews, 1983; Perry, 2016; Mitee, 2017a).

How much would it cost to scan the old print versions of legal information into *editable texts*, using optical character recognition technology (OCR),[131] and then proofread them to ensure they are the exact version of the original? How much would it cost to buy a web hosting plan,[132] buy a domain name,[133] develop a website, upload documents to it, and maintain it (all of which a mere handful of government employees can carry out)? Yet, that is all that is required for a *basic* ONOLIW that is still much, much better than print-based legal information, even without the sophistication of modern legal information systems (Mitee, 2017a, pp. 1434, 1436). A modern ONOLIW can be developed using open-source software and development tools that are available free of charge, thereby saving considerable costs. One example of such use is the government of Nauru's Online Legal Database.[134]

Therefore, lack of political will (Bannister, 1996; Mitee, 2017a, pp. 1433–1437), bad governance, and corruption are the most likely causes of the lack of proper OLIWs in many developing countries. For instance, that may be the explanation for Nigeria not having any proper OLIW (Mitee, 2017a, p. 1434), unlike countries such as Kenya, The Bahamas, and Antigua and Barbuda.^[135] Nigeria has been one of the world's major oil- and gas-producing countries for decades (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2007; Consumer News and Business Channel, 2011). It ranked poorly at 157 out of 179 countries on the World Governance Index 2011 (Forum for a New World Governance, 2011) and 136 out of 176 countries on the Corruption Perceptions Index 2016 (Transparency International, 2016). This lack of political will on the part of the governments of many developing countries is a good reason for global governance of public access to legal information. The reason is that such governments require some external coercive measures under international law to realise the need to perform their legal and moral duty to provide free and adequate public access to their legal information (Mitee, 2017a, pp. 1431, 1457–1460), an indispensable component of which is online access (discussed in Section 2.1 above).

4. CONCLUSION

This article has examined the use of the *system of official networked one-stop legal information websites* (ONOLIWs) as a workable technological tool for enhancing national and global public access to *official* legal information published by governments and IGOs that make laws, who have the legal and moral duty to provide free and adequate access to them.^[136]

The revolutionary impact of free global online access to legal information, started by Thomas R. Bruce and Peter W. Martin when they co-founded Cornell University's Legal Information Institute (LII) in 1992, reveals the indispensability of websites to every successful public access to legal information project. More than 30 million people from over 240 countries and territories visit LII annually (Bruce, 2015, p. 1). Many governments worldwide have accepted this reality and have published their legal information online, but lack of a proper approach to its implementation has resulted in a multiplicity of isolated websites containing fragments of legal information.^[137] This situation has caused people considerable difficulties in finding the *available* online legal information of any country. A review of the OLIWs of 51 countries, which include all the six English-speaking developed countries (the US, UK, Ireland, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand), has confirmed the global existence of the problem which is not limited to developing countries that have economic and technological disadvantages.^[138]

The ONOLIWs system developed in this article is the definitive solution to the existing difficulty of finding all the fragments of a country's official legal information that are littered on a multiplicity of isolated OLIWs.^[139] It provides a two-pronged solution that guarantees the availability of the whole stock of the online legal information of a *legislative jurisdiction* (defined in Section 1 of this article) on a single website (the ONOLIW) and the easy accessibility of all the ONOLIWs of a *country* via an exhaustive index. Every ONOLIW would contain a conspicuous link on the main navigation menu to this national index. This easy-access capability of the ONOLIWs system is indeed novel.

The proposed ONOLIWs system will therefore provide optimum access to any country's available official online legal information, the aggregation of which is seamless access to global legal information. It will thereby promote good knowledge of the law, which has many benefits for individuals, organisations, and the state itself. Governments at all levels (national, state, and local), IGOs that create legal information, and developers of their OLIWs will benefit immensely from the concept of ONOLIWs and the mechanics of its implementation

developed in this article. Adoption of the proposed policy framework that incorporates the ONOLIWs concept is imperative.

APPENDIX: OFFICIAL NATIONAL LEGISLATION WEBSITES OF 60 ENGLISH-SPEAKING COUNTRIES

S/No.	Country	Official National Legislation Website	Remarks
A. DEVELOPED COUNTRIES			
1	Australia	https://www.legislation.gov.au/	No NOSAF ^[140]
2	Canada	http://laws.justice.gc.ca/eng/	No NOSAF
3	Ireland	http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/	No NOSAF
4	New Zealand	http://www.legislation.govt.nz/	No NOSAF
5	United Kingdom	http://www.legislation.gov.uk/	No NOSAF
6	United States	https://www.govinfo.gov/app/browse/category	No NOSAF
B. DEVELOPING COUNTRIES			
7	Anguilla	http://www.anguillalaws.com/	No NOSAF No free online access. Revised edition of its complete Acts in print and CD-ROM costs \$1,875.00; CD-ROM only costs \$1,200.00 (http://www.anguillalaws.com/law.php). Individual laws cost \$10.00 - \$45.00 each (http://www.anguillalaws.com/act.php); only regulations are free.
8	Antigua and Barbuda	http://laws.gov.ag/new/index.php	No NOSAF

9	Bahamas	http://laws.bahamas.gov.bs/cms/en/	No NOSAF
10	Barbados	http://www.barbadosparliament.com/bills/search	No NOSAF
11	Belize	http://www.belize-law.org/web/lawadmin/index2.html	No NOSAF
12	Bermuda	http://www.bermudalaws.bm/SitePages/Home.aspx	No NOSAF
13	Botswana	http://www.elaws.gov.bw/	No NOSAF
14	British Virgin Islands	http://eservices.gov.vg/gazette/content/about-official-gazette	I searched but could not find its official legislation website. Print Official Gazette that contains legislation is by paid subscription.
15	Cayman Islands	https://www.judicial.ky/	No NOSAF Access to the online database is by paid subscription.
16	Dominica	http://www.dominica.gov.dm/laws-of-dominica	No NOSAF
17	Falkland Islands	http://www.fig.gov.fk/legal/index.php/gazettes-supplements	No NOSAF Official Gazette on CD-ROM that contains legislation is by paid subscription (£40.00 within Falkland Islands).
18	Fiji	http://www.fiji.gov.fj/Fiji-Laws/2016.aspx	No NOSAF
19	Gambia	http://assembly.gov.gm/index.php/category/news/assembly-business/acts-bills/	I searched but could not find its official legislation website.

20	Ghana	http://www.parliament.gh/docs?type=Acts&OT	I searched but could not find its official legislation website.
21	Gibraltar	http://www.gibraltarlaws.gov.gi/	No NOSAF
22	Grenada	http://laws.gov.gd/	No NOSAF
23	Guernsey	http://www.guernseylegalresources.gg/article/6325/Home	No NOSAF
24	Guyana	http://mola.gov.gy/information/laws-of-guyana	No NOSAF
25	Hong Kong	https://www.elegislation.gov.hk/	No NOSAF
26	India	http://indiacode.nic.in/	No NOSAF
27	Isle of Man	https://legislation.gov.im/cms/	No NOSAF
28	Jamaica	http://moj.gov.jm/laws	No NOSAF
29	Jersey	https://www.jerseylaw.je/Pages/default.aspx	No NOSAF
30	Kenya	http://kenyalaw.org/kl/	No NOSAF
31	Lesotho	http://www.parliament.ls/assembly/index.php?option=com_docman&task=cat_view&gid=38&Itemid=89	I searched but could not find its official legislation website. No legislation was found on the Parliament website.

32	Liberia	http://legislature.gov.lr/	I searched but could not find its official legislation website. Legislature website not accessible.
33	Malawi	http://www.parliament.gov.mw/#/bills	No NOSAF Just a few Acts were available on the Parliament website.
34	Malta	http://www.justiceservices.gov.mt/	No NOSAF
35	Mauritius	http://attorneygeneral.govmu.org/English/LawsofMauritius/Pages/default.aspx	No NOSAF
36	Montserrat	http://agc.gov.ms/	No NOSAF
37	Namibia	http://www.parliament.na/	No NOSAF
38	Nauru	http://ronlaw.gov.nr/nauru_lpms/	No NOSAF
39	Nigeria	http://www.nassnig.org/	No NOSAF Just a few Acts and bills were available on the National Assembly website.
40	Papua New Guinea	http://www.parliament.gov.pg/bills-and-legislation	No NOSAF Just a few Acts and bills were available on the Parliament website.
41	Philippines	http://www.congress.gov.ph/legisdocs/?v=ra	No NOSAF
42	Pitcairn	http://www.government.pn/Laws/	No NOSAF

43	Seychelles	http://www.attorneygeneraloffice.gov.sc/index.php/resources/print-publications/laws-of-seychelles	No NOSAF
44	Sierra Leone	http://www.parliament.gov.sl/dnn5/ParliamentaryBusiness/Acts.aspx	No NOSAF
45	Singapore	http://statutes.agc.gov.sg/aol/home.w3p	No NOSAF
46	Solomon Islands	http://www.parliament.gov.sb/index.php?q=node/237	No NOSAF
47	South Africa	http://www.gov.za/documents/acts	No NOSAF
48	St Helena	http://www.sainthelena.gov.sh/laws/	No NOSAF
49	St Kitts and Nevis	https://www.gov.kn/	I searched but could not find its official legislation website.
50	St Lucia	http://www.govt.lc/house-of-assembly	I searched but could not find its official legislation website.
51	St Vincent and the Grenadines	http://www.assembly.gov.vc/assembly/	I searched but could not find its official legislation website.
52	Swaziland	http://www.gov.sz/index.php?option=com_content&view=category&id=73&Itemid=624	I searched but could not find its official legislation website.
53	Tanzania	http://www.lrct.go.tz/laws-of-tanzania/	No NOSAF Just a few Acts were available on the Law Reform Commission website.
54	Tonga	http://crownlaw.gov.to/cms/	No NOSAF

55	Trinidad and Tobago	http://www.legalaffairs.gov.tt/Laws_listing.html and http://laws.gov.tt/	No NOSAF
56	Turks and Caicos Islands	https://www.gov.tc/agc/laws/revised-laws-2014	No NOSAF
57	Uganda	http://www.ulrc.go.ug/laws-of-uganda	No NOSAF
58	Vanuatu	https://parliament.gov.vu/index.php/icons/members-of-10th-legislature	No NOSAF No legislation was available on the Parliament website which directs visitors to the Pacific Islands Legal Information Institute (PACLI) for its legislation.
59	Zambia	http://www.parliament.gov.zm/acts/volumes	No NOSAF
60	Zimbabwe	http://www.parlzim.gov.zw/acts	No NOSAF

‘No NOSAF’ means ‘no networked one-stop access feature’. See Section 2.2 of this article for the networked one-stop access feature criteria.

Classification of countries as “developed” and “developing” is based on the United Nations classification (United Nations, 2017, pp. 153–154).

Date of last access of all the websites: 15 March 2017.

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United States v. Casson, 434 F.2d 415 (D.C. Cir. 1970).

Victoria University of Wellington Students Association v. Shearer (Government Printer) [1973] 2 NZLR 21 (SC) (New Zealand).

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[2] I coined this term and its abbreviation.

[3] For the list of these categories, see the meaning of 'official legal information' below, in this Section 1 and in Section 2.1.

[4] Discussed in Section 2 below.

[5] Discussed in Section 2.4 below.

[6] Discussed in Section 2.1 below.

[7] Discussed in Sections 2.5, 2.6, and 3.3 below.

[8] I coined this term and its abbreviation.

[9] Discussed in Section 3 below.

[10] See Section 2.2 below for the meaning of findability.

[11] Discussed in Section 2 below.

[12] Discussed in Section 3.3 below.

[13] I coined this term and its abbreviation.

[14] Discussed in Section 3.1.1 below.

[15] I coined this term and its abbreviation. It refers to any legal information website owned by the national (or federal) government.

[16] For the list of these categories, see the meaning of 'official legal information' in Section 1 above and Section 2.1 below.

[17] Article IV, section 17 of the Constitution of the US State of Wisconsin (United States).

[18] For my discussion of adequate public access to indigenous customary law, see Mitee, L. E. (2017). Huricompatisation: The Concept of Human Rights-Compliant Public Access to the Customary Law of Indigenous Communities. *Forthcoming peer-reviewed article*.

[19] Jamar (2001); Mommers (2011); and Danner (2012).

[20] Legal Information Institute: <https://www.law.cornell.edu/>

[21] See their quoted remark in Section 1 above.

[22] I coined this term and its abbreviation.

[23] See the Appendix to this article.

[24] See the Appendix to this article.

[25] Based on the state of the websites examined in March 2017.

[26] About Us: <https://www.govinfo.gov/about>

[27] Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs): About Govinfo – When will Govinfo Replace FDsys?: <https://www.govinfo.gov/help/faqs>

[28] Bills and Statutes: <https://www.govinfo.gov/app/browse/#browse?&page=category>

[29] United States Courts Opinions: <https://www.govinfo.gov/app/collection/uscourts>

[30] Court Website Links: <http://www.uscourts.gov/about-federal-courts/federal-courts-public/court-website-links>

[31] United States Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit. Retrieved from <http://www.ca9c.uscourts.gov/>

[32] Opinions: <https://www.supremecourt.gov/opinions/opinions.aspx>

[33] Terms of Use: <https://www.law.cornell.edu/lii/terms/documentation>

[34] Legislation.gov.uk: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/>

[35] Browse Legislation: Scotland: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/browse/scotland>

[36] Browse Legislation: Wales: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/browse/wales>

[37] Browse Legislation: Northern Ireland: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/browse/ni>

[38] Bills: <http://www.parliament.scot/>

[39] Legislation: <http://www.assembly.wales/en/bus-home/bus-legislation/Pages/bus-legislation.aspx>

[40] Assembly Legislation: <http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/assembly-business/legislation/>

- [41] Judgments: <https://www.judiciary.gov.uk/judgments/>
- [42] About Judgments: <https://www.scotcourts.gov.uk/search-judgments/about-judgments>
- [43] Judicial Decisions: <https://www.courtsni.gov.uk/en-GB/Judicial%20Decisions/Pages/default.aspx>
- [44] Decided Cases: <https://www.supremecourt.uk/decided-cases/>
- [45] Decided Cases: <https://www.jcpc.uk/decided-cases/index.html>
- [46] Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland all have Councils with law-making powers.
- [47] BAILII: <http://www.bailii.org/>
- [48] Judgments: <http://www.parliament.uk/about/how/business/judgments/>
- [49] Disclaimers of Liability: <http://www.bailii.org/bailii/disclaimers.html>
- [50] Electronic Irish Statute Book: <http://www.irishstatutebook.ie>
- [51] Acts of the Oireachtas: <http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/acts.html>
- [52] Statutory Instruments: <http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/statutory.html>
- [53] *Achtanna an Oireachtais*: <http://www.acts.ie/ga.toc.decade.html>
- [54] Welcome to the Houses of the Oireachtas: <http://www.oireachtas.ie/parliament/>
- [55] EUR-Lex: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/homepage.html?locale=en>
- [56] Judgments & Determinations:
<http://www.courts.ie/Judgments.nsf/FrmJudgmentsByCourtAll?OpenForm&l=en>
- [57] BAILII Databases: <http://www.bailii.org/databases.html>
- [58] Justice Laws Website: <http://www.laws.justice.gc.ca/eng/>
- [59] Site Web de la législation (Justice): <http://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/fra/>
- [60] Canadian System of Justice: Links to Resources:
<http://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/contact/link-lien.html>
- [61] Supreme Court Judgments: http://scc-csc.lexum.com/scc-csc/scc-csc/en/nav_date.do
- [62] LEGISinfo: <http://www.parl.gc.ca/LEGISINFO/Home.aspx?ParliamentSession=42-1>
- [63] Treaties, Laws and Regulations:
<https://www.canada.ca/en/government/system/laws.html>
- [64] For a guide to Canada's municipal governments, see Quesnel and Hamel (2006).

- [65] CanLII Website Terms of Use: <http://www.canlii.org/en/info/terms.html>
- [66] Federal Register of Legislation: <https://www.legislation.gov.au/>
- [67] Commonwealth Courts Portal: <https://www.comcourts.gov.au/>
- [68] For information on Australia's local governments, see Australian Local Government Association (n.d.).
- [69] Australasian Legal Information Institute: <http://www.austlii.edu.au/>
- [70] Disclaimers of Liability: <http://www.austlii.edu.au/austlii/disclaimers.html>
- [71] New Zealand Legislation: <http://www.legislation.govt.nz/>
- [72] What's on the Site and How It Works:
<http://www.legislation.govt.nz/howitworks.aspx#whatonsite>
- [73] Judicial Decisions Online: <https://forms.justice.govt.nz/jdo/Introduction.jsp>
- [74] Courts of New Zealand:
<http://www.courtsofnz.govt.nz/from/decisions/judgments.html>
- [75] Decisions: <https://www.justice.govt.nz/courts/decisions/>
- [76] Find Us: <https://www.justice.govt.nz/contact-us/find-us/>
- [77] For information on New Zealand local governments, see New Zealand Government (2011).
- [78] Licences and Regulations:
<http://www.aucklandcouncil.govt.nz/EN/licencesregulations/Pages/home.aspx>
- [79] Supreme Court of New Zealand: <http://www.nzlii.org/nz/cases/NZSC/>
- [80] Disclaimers of Liability: <http://www.nzlii.org/nzlii/disclaimers.html>
- [81] For the list of these categories, see the meaning of 'official legal information' in Section 1 above.
- [82] Based on the state of the websites examined in March 2017.
- [83] I coined this term and its abbreviation.
- [84] Digital Legislative Library: <http://laws.gov.tt/>
- [85] National Parliament of Solomon Islands:
<http://www.parliament.gov.sb/index.php?q=node/237>
- [86] Laws of Mauritius:
<http://attorneygeneral.govmu.org/English/LawsofMauritius/Pages/default.aspx>
- [87] Laws of Tanzania From 2002-2016: <http://www.lrct.go.tz/laws-of-tanzania/>

- [88] Searching for a Law?: <http://moj.gov.jm/laws>
- [89] Search Documents: <http://www.nassnig.org/document/acts>
- [90] Bills and Legislation: <http://www.parliament.gov.pg/bills-and-legislation>
- [91] Laws of Tanzania from 2002-2016: <http://www.lrct.go.tz/laws-of-tanzania/>
- [92] For the list of these categories, see the meaning of ‘official legal information’ in Section 1 above.
- [93] Kenya Law: <http://www.kenyalaw.org/kl/>
- [94] Seychelles Legal Information Institute: <http://www.seylii.org/>
- [95] Southern African Legal Information Institute: <http://www.saflii.org/>
- [96] Law Reporting: <http://www.judiciary.go.ug/data/smenu/25/Law%20Reporting.html>
- [97] Acts of Parliament: <https://parliament.gov.vu/index.php/icons/members-of-10th-legislature>
- [98] Central Intelligence Agency (2013).
- [99] For the list of these categories, see the meaning of ‘official legal information’ in Section 1 above.
- [100] See the Appendix to this article for links to their official legal information websites.
- [101] AnguillaLaws.com: <http://www.anguillalaws.com/>
- [102] Laws of the Cayman Islands: <https://www.judicial.ky/laws>
- [103] I coined both terms.
- [104] For the list of these categories, see the meaning of ‘official legal information’ in Section 1 above.
- [105] I coined this term and its abbreviation.
- [106] “On-site” here means on the same website.
- [107] I coined this term and its abbreviation. See Section 2.2 above.
- [108] European Competition Network (ECN):
http://ec.europa.eu/competition/index_en.html
- [109] See United States Government Publishing Office (2016).
- [110] EUR-Lex: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/homepage.html>
- [111] About EUR-Lex: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/content/welcome/about.html>

[112] For the list of these categories, see the meaning of ‘official legal information’ in Section 1 above.

[113] I coined this term and its abbreviation.

[114] Indian Treaties Database: <http://www.mea.gov.in/treaty.htm>

[115] Govinfo: <https://www.govinfo.gov/>

[116] Example, Mauritius:
<http://attorneygeneral.govmu.org/English/LawsofMauritius/Pages/default.aspx>

[117] Example, Jamaica: <http://moj.gov.jm/laws>

[118] National Parliament of Solomon Islands:
<http://www.parliament.gov.sb/index.php?q=node/237>

[119] EUR-Lex: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/homepage.html>

[120] I coined this term and its abbreviation.

[121] I coined this term and its abbreviation.

[122] Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers: <https://www.icann.org/>

[123] For the list of these categories, see the meaning of ‘official legal information’ in Section 1 above.

[124] Microsoft Edge: <https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/windows/microsoft-edge>

[125] For the list of these categories, see the meaning of ‘official legal information’ in Section 1 above.

[126] For the list of these categories, see the meaning of ‘official legal information’ in Section 1 above.

[127] The Law Library: <http://nigeria-law.org/LawLibrary.htm>

[128] About WorldLII: <http://www.worldlii.org/worldlii/index.html>

[129] WorldLII: <http://www.worldlii.org/>

[130] Some of the benefits of free public access to legal information are mentioned in Section 2.1 above; see also Mitee (2017a, pp. 1466–1469).

[131] See, for example, ABBYY (n.d.).

[132] See, for example, Godaddy (n.d.).

[133] See, for example, Names.co.uk (n.d.).

[134] About the System:
http://ronlaw.gov.nr/nauru_lpms/index.php/content/item/about-the-system

[\[135\]](#) See the Appendix to this article for the addresses of their legal information websites.

[\[136\]](#) Discussed in Section 2.1 above.

[\[137\]](#) Discussed in Section 2.1 above.

[\[138\]](#) Discussed in Section 2 above.

[\[139\]](#) Discussed in Section 3 above.

[\[140\]](#) 'No NOSAF' means 'no networked one-stop access feature'. See Section 2.2 of this article for the networked one-stop access feature criteria.