

Chapter 87

The Need for Policies to Overcome eGov Implementation Challenges

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ABSTRACT

Electronic Government (hereafter eGov) is a transformative agent upon political and civic activity: it involves the provision and use of information and services by citizens, businesses and governments; and thus has the potential to increase civic efficiency and transparency; to facilitate interaction between public, private and government entities; and ultimately to promote democracy and political stability. Academic literature covering transformational eGov activity in times of geopolitical instability (such as that which Syria is currently facing) is uncommon. We selected thirty-five papers for review, each covering aspects of eGov relevant to the Middle-East Arabic Countries and Syria, for the period between 2000 and 2013. This paper exposes five categories of challenge (Syrian Civil war and Instability, Human, Political, Infrastructure and Organisational) faced by eGov implementations in Middle-East Arabic Countries/Syria and proposes further work to investigate these.

1. INTRODUCTION

The scope and application of eGov has rapidly grown and evolved as it has been adopted worldwide. eGov consists of the digital interactions between governments and stakeholders hence

eGov delivery models include: G2C (government to citizen), G2B (government to business), G2E (government to employee), G2G (government to government), and C2G (citizen to government).

Despite the benefits of e-Government and what it could bring to both governments and citizens,

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-4666-9814-7.ch087

the implementation of e-Government initiatives in most of developing countries resulted in failure as reported by (Heeks, 2002) where it shows that 35% of e-Government projects in developing countries are total failures, 50% are partial failures, while the remaining 15% are successes. Nevertheless (Nations, 2012) states that the progress of eGov is not just providing online information about public services (static information), but also considered with the the number of government web-pages increases as information becomes more dynamic with users having more options for accessing information, more formal exchange between user and government service provider takes place, users easily access services prioritized by their needs, and fully complete integration of all online government services through a one-stop-shop.

Syrian's eGov Strategy is still at stage one by offering only static information about public services. The Syrian eGov strategy: "Enhancing Institutional Capacity for eGov Implementation" has been adopted as a five-year plan (2011-2015) and agreed with the United Nations Development Program (UNDP). (Republic, 2008) defines the goal of this project as *"to initiate the implementation phase of strategy through enhancing the operational capacity and the institutional framework for overall coordination of e-Gov initiative"* with the following six expected outputs: (1) An eGov Monitoring and Evaluation Unit will be established (2) An eGov Portal Unit will be created and launched (3) Standards will be adopted and supporting tools developed and required shared services developed (4) Efficient and timely Consulting Services will be available for eGov programs (5) A Communication and Public Relations strategy for eGov Projects will be in place and (6) An Enhanced institutional capacity for eGov Implementation should be supported.

In order to initiate the implementation phase of the strategy an executive team has been created comprising a *consulting unit*, a *monitoring and evaluation unit*, a *development and standardization unit*, and a *national eGov portal unit*. All units

work under the provision of (and report directly to) the Syrian Prime Minister: their tasks are (a) to support and develop IT strategies, (b) to provide technical support, (c) to enable and nurture eGov best practice, (d) to provide a monitoring service and (e) to implement a communication plan (Republic, 2008).

In Syria (as in many other developing countries) a comprehensible design and implementation of eGov is crucial to encourage adoption and help prevent the initiative from failing. Dada (2006) suggests that practitioners must understand the importance of the specific context within which they are working. This is true in the Syria case where (Heeks, 2002) commented on the same issue, saying that: *"There is widespread recognition that this challenge must be met by strategic building of national infrastructure"* he suggests that everyone involved in the project must fully understand the eGov initiative and be aware of its objectives, otherwise it will face failure *"they mainly end in failure; either partial or total"*. Heeks also highlights that such projects should consider the reality of citizen behaviour with their design: *"stakeholders must be sensitised to the large gaps that often exist between project design and public sector reality"*. Furthermore he argues that such services must be available: *"for 24 hours a day during the seven days of a week citizens of any given country should have full access to government information at any moment and everywhere"*. On another hand New technologies impacts the policy-making practices in many different ways, which becomes visible in various phases of the policy-making cycle, for this reason there has been an increasing interest by the Syrian Ministry of Communication and Technology to overcome barriers and challenges and to stay up to date with the new technology therefore, decisions has to be taken by policy makers to launch a project, this is called 'Syrian ICT Standards', the aim of this project is to train a group of trainees from Syrian experts to contribute to the training of workers in the public sector institutions to be able

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