

Chapter 3

A Review of e-Government Initiatives in Tanzania: Challenges and Opportunities

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ABSTRACT

Over the last few years, Tanzania has witnessed an increased usage and awareness of e-Government services. This is welcome news to all stakeholders in ensuring that services offered by the government and communications between the government and citizens are efficient and effective. Despite the good news, the reality in most cases has been that the e-Government projects are implemented as technical projects (mostly employing techno-centric approaches), ignoring other important considerations, with the implicit assumption that they will be used by the citizens. In this chapter, the authors conducted a study to assess the quality of provision, level of awareness, and degree of usage of e-Government services in Tanzania. Further, the study presents the challenges and opportunities which the Tanzanian Government faces in realizing its e-Government vision. It demonstrates that the e-Government projects are community projects and their design and implementation must take into account contextual, cultural, and environmental factors.

INTRODUCTION

E-Government is here to stay. Recent developments in technology, mobile devices, and Internet communications suggest that more end users will be connected as time goes on. It is widely accepted

that in the future, it is going to be extremely difficult to stay disconnected and staying connected will be less of our choice. The move towards Web Operating Systems is another interesting development. The confluence of all these developments will make e-Government a reality in the near future in all corners of the world. Thus, all countries

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should understand the e-Government phenomenon (its conceptualization, design, deployment, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation) and how important it is for their survival if they are going to become knowledge economies in the 21st century.

Several studies that have assessed the utility and Return on Investment (ROI) of e-Government projects suggest that a more holistic design approach which will take into account issues of culture, context and environment factors is a better way of ensuring the probable success of e-Government projects (Ulrike, Rivett, & Loudon, 2010; Rahman, 2007). These studies clearly show that when e-Government projects are further customized to the requirements of the country concerned, citizens make use of them more (Driss Kettani & Mahdi, 2008). It is also becoming common knowledge that parachuting these projects from other countries where they have been implemented successfully leads to a lot of undesirable results. An example of a successful implementation of an e-Government project has been the Madrid Participa initiative (Barrat & Reniu 2004; 2005). This project has been short-listed as finalist for the *European e-Government Awards 2007*, organised by the European Commission. Another finalist in the same awards was the ePetitions initiative e-Government of the UK (<http://www.epractice.eu/cases/1021>). These are some of successful e-Government projects which, if migrated to Tanzania, might not be able to take off successfully due to the difference in the contextual environments of the two areas.

The e-Government projects must result in change of working habits of civil servants towards being more responsive and efficient in their public delivery endeavors. This should include the change in Government processes, workflow and decision making. While these changes have been taking place in a lot of African countries as part of public reform programs, the changes made do not go far enough to provide the necessary and sufficient conditions for the e-Government projects

to be successful (Wescott, 1999). These projects must cater for the local communities, who are also expected to be involved in all the different phases of e-Government project implementation cycle: from strategy conceptualization and formation, design and implementation (Chango, 2007; Schuppan, 2009). The challenge of involving the local communities is significant as these communities are characterized by old age population, low education, lower Information Communication Technology (ICT) usage, low income levels and resistance to change as e-Government is not one of their priorities in order to survive (TGNP, 2006).

The literature is full of supply side of e-Government projects but very little research has been done on the demand side. Although this chapter probed a limited sample space, it intends to highlight what has been done on both the demand (the participation of citizens and businesses in the e-Government hierarchy) and the supply side (e-Government interventions in Tanzania). Despite global endeavors to encourage proliferation of e-Government applications towards an improved overall public delivery, a majority of citizens in some countries still prefer the traditional mode of government. For example, a study aimed at investigating the demand for e-Government services in Australia and New Zealand found that most people still prefer non-digital communications with the government (Gauld, et al., 2010). This is currently the case in Tanzania. The reasons for this state of affairs can be attributed to the perception that one can get a better deal in government services by availing him/herself to a face-to-face meeting. Other reasons include corruption, e-Barriers to participation, and unavailability of e-Government in most parts of Tanzania. For e-Government to succeed, there is a need for policy inducement including its implementation and the putting in place of various funding models (such as using the Public-Private-Partnership [PPP] model and/or getting the financial industry onboard) so that there are smooth and appropriate payment options for e-Government services. Significant

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