

Chapter 8

Adoption of E-Government in Africa: Challenges and Recommendations

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ABSTRACT

Increasingly, the importance of e-government is growing owing to higher quality delivery of government services, improved citizen empowerment through access to e-information, and better interactions between governments and their stakeholders. Despite all this recognition and appreciation of e-government, there is slow uptake and high failure of e-government in developing countries. A huge imbalance still remains between developed and developing countries, specifically in Africa because of numerous impediments. Africa lags far behind all other regions in the world. Some African countries have initiated e-government, such as Ghana, Nigeria, and South Africa, yet others have not taken any initiative or are very slow in realizing its full take off, for instance, Tanzania, Botswana, and Zambia. In light of the above background, the main purpose of this chapter is to determine the challenges and based on the findings make recommendations for adoption of E-Government in Arica. The chapter reviews the theoretical underpinning of E-Government as a tool for modernizing public administration; examines the present state of e-government in Africa; highlights the challenges and barriers African countries encounter in their quest to develop E-Government; reviews the role of public libraries in E-Government, and finally, makes recommendations for E-Government adoption in Africa and other developing countries.

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INTRODUCTION

Governments the world over are taking great strides to harness the advantages of information and communication technologies (ICTs) to improve their administration and provision of services to their citizens. ICTs provide governments with a wide range of opportunities to provide better information and services delivery and effective and efficient means of interacting with all their citizens, businesses, and other government partners (Che, 2002). Adoption of e-government has increased in most countries but at the same time the rate of adoption varies from country to country. Generally, developing countries, particularly African countries, are lagging behind in e-government adoption as compared to developed countries. The United Nations survey of 2012 puts the average for African countries at 0.253 which is below the world's average of 0.415. However, the disparity in e-government implementation between African countries is huge owing to a number of factors, including management, infrastructure, and human factors that vary across this large and heterogeneous continent.

CURRENT E-GOVERNMENT STATUS IN AFRICA

According to the above the recent United Nations e-Government Survey 2012, there has been improvement in most sub-regions of Africa except Northern Africa and Middle Africa improvement is minimal. However, most African countries remain at the tail end of the digital divide. Table 1 displays the top 10 ranked countries in Africa.

Table 1 shows that Seychelles leads in Eastern Africa and is ranked first among the top 10 ranked countries for e-Government development in the Africa. Overall at world level Seychelles is ranked 84th, which is 20 places up compared to 2010. Major improvements in government information systems, infrastructure, and integration of thematic services in finance, health, and many other sectors have improved its world ranking. To become globally competitive with a modern ICT enabled economy and a knowledge-based information society; Government of Seychelles used an integrated and interdependent strategic approach in order to enhance its e-Government services. Seychelles focused on ICT infrastructure, legal

Table 1. Top Ten ranked countries in Africa

Rank	Country	E-Gov Development Index		World E-Gov Development Ranking	
		2012	2010	2012	2010
1	Seychelles	0.5192	0.4179	84	104
2	Mauritius	0.5066	0.4645	93	77
3	South Africa	0.4869	0.4306	101	97
4	Tunisia	0.4833	0.4826	103	66
5	Egypt	0.4611	0.4518	107	86
6	Cape Verde	0.4297	0.4054	118	108
7	Kenya	0.4212	0.3338	119	124
8	Morocco	0.4209	0.3287	120	126
9	Botswana	0.4186	0.3637	121	117
10	Namibia	0.3937	0.3314	125	125
	Regional average	0.278	0.2733		
	World average	0.4882	0.4406		

Source: United Nations E-Government Survey 2012, p.14

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