Chapter 8

Local E-Government Management:
A Wider Window of E-Governance

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ABSTRACT

Despite the immense popularity and potency of electronic government, it is remain uncharted in many countries regarding proper implementation at the local government level. However, technology possess the prospect of improvement in the way government works, and make better interactions with their citizens. National governments are trying to realize this potential by finding ways to implement novel technology in spearheading its utilization to achieve the best services for their citizens. They ranges from awareness raising campaign, knowledge acquisition, social networking to strategic planning, development, and implementation. This article has tried to draw a line of reference by put forwarding the importance of local e-government organizational structure, and their supremacies in terms of utilization of ICT. Along this context, the article has attempted to synthesize a few prospective local e-government scenarios, focus on their adaptation of ICT, and puts forward recommendations to improve local e-government for offering better information services.

INTRODUCTION

Governments throughout the world are in quest of finding ways to deliver public services more efficiently and effectively. Incorporation of electronic governance (e-governance) in the local governments tier is an option often discussed, although the expectations often differ. For example, some expect service delivery costs to be reduced, many hopes for equitable provision of

public services and others anticipate better planning across a metropolitan area. Various social and political motivations may also be reasons for the change as well. This article is intended to look into various issues of e-government at the local government levels, study the parameters for promotion of e-governance at the grass roots to yield positive economic benefits. In this aspect, there are no straight forward way of improving the e-government system at the local government level, rather many factors control the system, including the structure of the government (tiers of the government system), local demographics (population, size, density), set of responsibilities authorized to local governments and the homogeneity of preferences within the area (Commonwealth, 2004; Fox & Gurley, 2006).

Nowadays, local e-government management includes the extended use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) within government for purposes of improving service delivery to citizens or to enhance back-office operations. The implementation of ICT for overall development and advancement of e-government strategies are likely to have a strong bias towards cities and local towns where most of the citizens reside.

However, it has been observed that, at the national level and in the advantaged localities (central cities, capital cities, and urban areas) ICT's are extensively used to address only key business processes. The national e-government policy does not always apply in devotion to the local government level. Even they are being applied; the policy can not avoid duplication of efforts, problems of interoperability, and inability to leverage economies of scale and security. The key components that drive the local governance and ICT's remain access, content, citizen service, and economic and social development, and for proper implementation of the ICT strategies, the need for these initiatives targeting marginalized areas has also remained not properly identified. Furthermore, in spite of the local governments differ considerably in terms of capacity, content,

service delivery, and effectiveness; they have to be dynamic and developmental due to their involvement in local economic development. Local governments need to take the role of the key player in developing integrated rural-based, citizen-centric, information-driven, user-friendly, easily-accessible, and dynamic e-governance system (CPSI, 2005; Samarajiva & Zainudeen, 2008).

Typical services at the local government level incorporates:

- Adults'/children's social care (basic education, pension scheme, retirement plan, primary health, child mortality)
- Economic development (small and medium enterprises, growth centers, consumer commodity, VoIP, call centers, telecenters, multi-purpose information centers)
- Health and Education (nutrition, medicare, continuing education)
- Highways (toll centers, growth centers, village markets)
- Housing and Building control (land use planning, rural and sub-urban planning, zone plans, construction, maintenance)
- Roads and footpaths (mapping, planning, zone-plan, implementation, maintenance)
- Architecture, building control and design (sustainable operational policies and planning, standardization of policies and rules)
- Traffic and transportation (operation and management)
- Art galleries, Leisure, recreation and museums (infotainment, culture)
- Car parking (design, planning, implementation)
- Cemeteries
- Environmental health (awareness campaign and promotional activities on ecosystem management)
- Fire service (safety and security)
- Libraries (knowledge building, knowledge promotion, social networking)
- Parks and open spaces

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