The Future of E-Government in Developing Countries

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Presentation Structure

- What have we learnt from the case studies
- Status of adoption across countries
  - Service delivery to citizens
  - Service delivery to business
  - Empowering citizens and communities
- Critical success factors in implementation
- Assessing preparedness for E-Government
- Choosing an implementation approach
Factors Driving E-government in Developing Countries

- Personal initiative of reform-minded politicians and civil servants.
- Helps implement agenda for Governance Reform- seen as next stage of reforms
- Early initiatives have created a competition amongst departments, states and countries
- Demand for better services from investors
- Citizen demand, though still weak
- Leapfrogging in technology is a source of pride
Stages in Implementation

- Publishing on the web
  -- Caveat: Quality and keeping up-to-date
- Actual delivery of service (tax, license renewal)
  -- A variety of delivery models have emerged
- Process on-line payment on internet PORTALS
  -- Only a few examples

E-Government is in an early stage. Even in the developed world a large number of departments are still to go on-line, and those which are on-line are being used by only a fraction of the population. The trend is for more on-line services and more citizens transacting on the Portals.
E-Government Applications

- Large Numbers in Service Delivery to citizens
  - departments with regulatory function have moved but developmental agencies are slow
  - more can be done in health, education, transport, judiciary where Government has a major delivery role
  - significant re-engineering has not been done
  - services that do not cross departmental boundaries are on-line: utility payment, certificates and licenses

- Little vertical/horizontal integration across departments

- Tax collection and e-procurement are popular

- Only a few experiments focused on empowerment

- Benefits not independently audited
Service Delivery to Citizens

- Multi-modal delivery... internal competition
  - Departments going on-line
  - Conveniently located Service Centers (kiosks)
  - Self Service through a Portal one-stop shop
- Kiosk based delivery is most popular
- Privacy/security issues not major issues
- Local Governments have the maximum potential
- Urban/Rural divide needs to be addressed
- Cost recovery models need to evolve
Departments Going On-line

- Stand alone / different units interconnected
- Initiatives likely to be owned by a department. Significant re-engineering possible
- A bottom up development takes place. Does not need a grand strategy.
- In the absence of an extensive and high band width network infrastructure, could be a first step to other models
- Citizens need to visit many departments, although each one may be more efficient
Conveniently-located Service Centers

- Counters manned by Government functionaries run by public/private agencies
- Multiple services at each location: payment, licenses, certificates
- Not tightly coupled with the back-end
- Can quickly move traffic from departments to service centers
- Requires significant coordination
Self Service through a Portal one-stop shop

- Value is delivered through wide scope of services, e.g., life cycle support
- Paper forms and movement can be avoided
- Requires complete back end-computerization and integration for work flow and data sharing
- Assumes high Internet penetration and willingness and ability of citizen to use it
- Security and mutual trust are important. Governments may perceive greater risk for misuse
- Usage build-up may be more gradual than expected. Cost implications
- Requires strong central leadership for co-ordination
Cost Recovery

- Charging a fee to citizens. There are hidden costs in poorly delivered free services.
- Saving costs: manpower/productivity
  - More likely in the long run
- Generating additional taxes
- Generating revenues from add-on services
- Sharing development/operational costs with partners
Services to Business

- Tax collection (customs/excise/sales) and E-procurement are the key areas
- Internet infrastructure is not a bottleneck
- Investments can be made as pay back is quick through increased collection
- Improves overall investment climate
- Standardization and off-the-shelf products
Empowering Citizens and Communities

- Is the right to information guaranteed?
- Are the back-end data systems geared to provide meaningful information?
- Do citizens trust Government information?
- Role of the media-power of Web publishing
- Dealing with illiteracy: Is technology the answer?
- Role of empowered intermediaries
- Building appropriate content: effort in understanding needs and delivery in local language and idiom
Key Learning for Successful Implementation

- **Justification for projects**
  - Clarity about benefits... Many projects still see IT as an end.
  - Balancing cost, payoff, and risk in implementation
  - Use appropriate/indigenous technology

- **Raising resources (Bankable Projects)**
  - Poor are willing to pay: should deliver value
  - Private sector involvement -- BOT, BOLT

- **Organization to design, develop and implement**
  - Strong Internal Leadership
  - Insourse Analysis; Outsource Design, Development

- **Project management**
  - Rolling out to large number of sites
  - Management of change
Implementation Approach: No Winning Models

- Centralized, well-defined and controlled national strategy vs. bottom up -- letting a thousand flowers bloom... Risks and merits of each approach
- E-government as the culmination of public sector reforms (preceded by other efforts to rationalize government activity) vs. launching e-government applications to serve as a catalyst for change?
- Public-Private partnership and the role of Government agencies
- Think BIG, start small, scale up... balancing scope and scale
- Start with front end or computerize back-end operations first?
Assessing Readiness

- Leadership by elected executives
- Administrative culture oriented to service
- Clearly articulated programs for online service delivery
- Project Management: ability to delineate scope and negotiate with vendors
- Mature technical infrastructure, back office use
- High penetration of Internet
- Enabling legal framework
- Aware and demanding citizenry
Why Should the World Bank be Interested?

- E-Government can advance the agenda on Governance and fiscal reform, transparency, corruption, empowerment and poverty reduction
- Significant impact on corruption: immediate at point of delivery; plus it decreases the payoff for lucrative postings; lowers tolerance in society
- Potential is recognized ... but harnessing is difficult
- Some pioneers have shown that gains can be real
- Challenge is to promote widespread use
- Bank can play a role in all stages
Varying Profiles of Client Countries

**Expanding E-Government Environments**: Existing human capital, technology and legal framework; demonstrated success through pilot projects. **Issues**: expanding services to more stakeholders and expansion of infrastructure.

**Mixed Environments**: Possess some financial resources, but lack the human capital and enabling frameworks. Need technical assistance in assessing e-readiness, drafting an enabling legislation, training of civil servants and building applications.

**e-Absent Environments**: Lack financial resources, technical infrastructure and human capital. In many cases, these are the poorest clients and will need significant assistance to cross the digital divide. Initiate pilot projects.
Broad Areas of Support

- TA related to policy advice and institution building, investments, lending, grants, and E-Government related knowledge.
- Broadening and deepening sector and institutional reform; supporting human capacity in building E-government; supporting E-Government applications; and increasing access to information infrastructure.
Future of E-Government

Past experience can repeat
Information Technology promise remains undelivered

E-Government can help Developing Societies transform themselves

The choice is yours