ICT and E-governance at the Grassroots: Devising an Enabling Law

~ *Ph. D.* **Adebimpe Umoren** *(Department of Accounting, College of Development Studies, Covenant University, Canaanland, Ota, Ogun State, Nigeria)*
~ **Samuel Faboyede** *(Department of Accounting, College of Development Studies, Covenant University, Canaanland, Ota, Ogun State, Nigeria)*

Abstract: *The innovation of e-governance enhances good governance, strengthens the democratic process, facilitates access to information, improves citizen participation and the quality of life, using the instrument of Information and Communications Technology (ICT). There is growing concern that e-governance at the local government level can: improve the quality of services to its constituents, improve efficiency, effectiveness, transparency of government operations, build the capacity of civil society to participate in the government policy, reduce corruption and foster accountability. This paper discusses the concept, benefits, state and challenges of e-governance in developing countries, using the empirical analysis of a local government in Ogun State, Nigeria. Findings show that there is real need for harvesting the potential to streamline administrative systems and improve the delivery of government services. It concludes that although e-governance holds great prospects across Nigeria, vast majority of local governments in Nigeria are miles away from e-governance and recommends, amongst others, that local governments should be mandated under law to use electronic means in their operations.*

Key words: E-governance, ICT, Local Government, Information, Developing Countries.

1. Introduction

In Nigeria as in many other parts of the world, the public sector is at crossroads, facing challenging socio-economic conditions, institutional changes coupled with the profound impact of modern technologies. In order to cope with this numerous challenges, governments around the World, both in developing and developed nations are embracing electronic governance or what is simply abbreviated to be e-governance. E-governance is an innovative approach to addressing the traditional problems of governance. It utilizes Information and Communication Technology (ICT) to promote good governance, bringing in greater efficiency, effectiveness, accountability, responsiveness and transparency in government functioning. Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) when adopted, can improve the reach, enhance the base, minimize the processing costs, increase transparency, and reduce the cycle times (Bhatnagar, 2004).

The broad activities of e-governance include publishing, interaction and transaction processing. Many governments have made attempts to make available government information electronically to the public. At the moment, compared to the private sector most efforts are centered on publishing, there is relatively little in the way of interaction or transaction processing. According to Nath (2006), although various African governments such as Benin, Cote D'Ivoire, Cuba, Ghana, Nigeria, Uganda, and Zimbabwe, maintain official government websites on the Internet but they are not sufficiently valuable to the public. Governance information should be customized, timely and trusted to have value. Governments, particularly in developing countries face limited resources to move

fast in e-government, so a strong partnership between the public, government, business and the civil society is instrumental in determining the expected outcomes and the effectiveness of e–governance (Brito, 2006). Many developing country governments face problems of inefficiency, internal and external communication breakdowns, poor service delivery, and corruption.

While developing countries are still struggling to provide the basic necessities of life, which they lack like food, shelter, education and health care services, they are also confronted with the digital revolution. They are therefore placed in a dicey situation i.e. how to share the meager resources between the basic necessities of life and provision of ICT infrastructure (Obasanjo, 2003). In spite of the difficulties, Nigeria supports the goals and the shared vision of the Information Society as articulated by Resolution 56/183 of the United Nations General Assembly, which seeks to put at the disposal of common humanity, the benefits of ICT (Obasanjo, 2003). Nigeria has made some efforts to address the problems by adopting a national ICT Policy. This aims at creating the necessary enabling environment with emphasis on public-private partnership for information technology development. According to Momah (1999:2), in order for Nigeria to develop sustainably: 'Nigerians must think technology, talk technology, trust technology, try technology and tap technology. Some state governments in Nigeria have registered their presence on the internet through official websites. These websites are part of their efforts to promote e-governance and improve government service delivery. The sites provide a wide range of information about the states and their people, government and services and business

opportunities. Examples of such states include Ogun, Lagos, Ondo, Akwa Ibom, and Jigawa states.

To date little progress has been recorded on e-governance at the grassroots level in Nigeria. In the federal system, the Local Government (LG) is easily seen as the government at the grassroots (Osisioma, 2005). Local government, as defined by Odenigwe (1977), as cited in (Osisioma, 2005) is " A system of local administration under which local authorities and towns are organized to maintain law and order, provide some limited range of social services and public amenities, and encourage the cooperation and participation of the inhabitants in joint endeavours towards the improvement of their conditions of living". The Cabinet Office in U.K. (2006) identified L.G. as democratically elected by the constituents, proffer local leadership, endowed with power to foster community well being because they are connected to the community and local needs and aspirations. At the grassroots level in Nigeria, the effectiveness and efficiency in delivering government programs have been drastically reduced with time, public services are not easily assessable, information quality have decreased and they are unable to adequately demonstrate accountability and transparency. To overcome these challenges, it is imperative to implement e-governance at the grassroots by devising an enabling law.

In this light, this paper focuses on the need to use ICT to promote good governance at the grassroots in Nigeria. It highlights the challenges and prospects inherent in implementing e-governance and proffer ways of accomplishing e-local government in Nigeria. Empirical evidences were collected from a local government in Ogun State, namely Ado Odo/ Otta. The paper is divided into five sections. After the introduction, which is section one, section two briefly reviews relevant and related literatures. Section three addresses the research methodology employed while section four presents the data and discussion. Section five concludes the paper and highlights the recommendations

2. Review of Relevant Literature

2.1 E-Governance

E-governance is an innovative approach to addressing the traditional problems of governance. It utilizes ICT to enhance the performance of government functions and services. Broadly defined, e-governance is the use of ICT to promote good governance, bringing in greater efficiency, effectiveness, accountability, responsiveness and transparency in government functioning. E-Governance is about change of mind set: doing things differently and effectively - and with results (Adeoye, 2006). E-governance fosters a citizen-centered administration; it allows the public to communicate with the government, to participate in decision-making process and to reflect their true needs. Backus (2001) defined e-governance as the application of ICT in:

(1) the interaction between government and citizens (2) the interaction between government and businesses, as well as (3) in internal government operations to simplify and improve democratic, government and business aspects of Governance. According to Coleman (n.d), the fourth African Development Forum (held in Addis in October 2004) produced a Consensus Statement declaring that:

E-governance… is an important innovation for enhancing good governance and

strengthening the democratic process and can also facilitate access to information, freedom of expression, greater equity, efficiency, productivity growth and social inclusion. Successful e-government initiatives can have demonstrable and tangible impact on improving citizen participation and quality of life as a result of effective multi-stakeholder partnerships. African governments need to develop appropriate policy frameworks, supported by legislation for e-governance that are linked to strategic developmentobjectives; enlist high-ranking political e-government champions; focus awareness, outreach and training efforts on the less privileged segment of targeted users, particularly women and neglected rural communities; and promote local content and supports local language development.

In other words, e-governance uses electronic means to support and stimulate good governance. In a similar vein, along the views of Adeoye (2006), Brito et al (2006) posited that e-government is not only about introducing or using technological tools. It is fundamentally about a change in mindset and work culture in order to integrate government processes and functions to serve the citizens better. Good governance refers to the quality of the relationship between the government and its citizens in the context of how government policies and administration have affected and transformed the lives of the citizens (Osisioma, 2005).

There is growing concern that e-governance at the local government level can: improve the quality of local government services to its constituents, support decentralization and democratic governance; improve efficiency, effectiveness, and transparency of government operations; build the capacity of civil society to participate in the government policy, reduce corruption and foster accountability. The result would be governance that is cheaper, quicker, better and innovative.

2.2 Information and Communications Technology (ICT)

ICT includes technologies such as desktop and laptop computers, internet, telephone, wireless devices and other communication devices. ICT is an increasingly powerful tool for participating in global markets; promoting political accountability; improving the delivery of basic services; and enhancing local development opportunities. ICT have the potential to streamline administrative systems and improve the delivery of government services to its customers (electorate, businesses, and other interest groups). According to Brito (2006) 'Information and communication technologies can only enhance the transformation of work culture by serving a variety of ends: better delivery of government services to citizens, improved government interactions with business and industry, citizen empowerment through access to information and participation for decision-making, and more efficient government management"

ICT brings about contemporary opportunities for innovation in government, innovations in provision of information to the public, innovations in delivery of public service and innovation in managing democratic processes (Dutton, 1996). An illustration of this can be viewed in Table 1.

Table 1: Some types of public electronic service delivery arrangements.

ICT Task	Applications	Systems that can be used
Transactions	Payment of services, Licences etc, welfare benefits	Electronic funds transfer; multimedia kiosks; automatic tellers; smart cards; expert systems
	Voting; public opinion polling	Interactive TV; voice mail; screen phones; Internet
	Electronic tax returns	Phone + voice check; PCs
	Road charging systems	Automatic vehicle monitors
Narrowcasting	Public meetings	Cable and Satellite networks
	Up-to-date information	Internet; multimedia kiosks; CD-ROMs; bulletin boards; videotext
Retrieval of Information	Gaining access to government information	Internet; on-line databases
	Answering public queries	Voice response; electronic mail
	Supporting government officials in delivering services	Executive information services; expert systems; electronic mail
Remote Communication	Forums on public issues	Internet; Computer conferencing
	Public complaint and requests	Internet; kiosks; voice mail
	Intercommunity meetings and consultations	Video and audio conferencing; videophones and local cable networks

Source: Dutton (1996)

ICT can be used essentially for delivering services online and changing working practices and processes using the new technologies.

Service delivery online includes:

(i) publishing information - Notifying and showing amendments online.

(ii) exchanging information for example legislative information system can be used to improve the quality and quantity of information used by Members of Parliament to formulate and debate legislation and policy.

(iii) making enquiries or consultation - Seeking comments online for particular applications or seeking views on planning briefs, development plan, etc. Remote video could improve discussion with applicants and objectors, and also help out planning committees making decisions

(iv) making a transaction - such as making an application, ordering or buying a product or publication.

Changing Working Practices and Processes includes:

(i) the process of information gathering electronically to meet management needs.

(ii) remote communication with customers. (iii) the infrastructure needs to be in place both for allowing communication by staff and customers online. This can be in form of local access points, videoconferencing facilities, kiosks, etc as well as promoting web access from home, school and workplaces.

(iv) significant training needs to take place to enable staff to work effectively, and for managers to manage effectively, using the new technologies.

2.3 The State of e-governance in Africa

E-governance has become more and more prominent around the world. In 2001 most countries worldwide were in the early phase of e-governance (Backus, 2001). Since then, most Governments have been making rapid progress to promote citizen awareness about policies and programmes, approaches and strategies on their websites. In 2001, the UN E-government Survey listed 143 member states as using the Internet in some capacity (UNPAN, 2001); by 2004, 93 per cent or 178 out of 191 member states had a website presence This has increased to 179 in 2005 (UNPAN 2005). In 2005, majority of the UN Member States have fully embraced electronic service delivery. According to the global e-government readiness rankings in 2005, the United States (0.9062) is the world leader, followed by Denmark (0.9058), Sweden (0.8983), and then United Kingdom (0.8777).

Africa is the continent with the lowest level of access to Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs). Africa has 13.4% of the world's population but just 2.0% of the world's fixed-lines and 2.5% of its mobile telephones. It has 1.7% of the world's personal computers and 1.4% of its Internet users (African Research for Information Social Emergence, 2003). The expansion of ICT opportunities is a central part of the New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD) and many African leaders agree with the priority of introducing these technologies in order to accelerate their development. African countries vary considerably in conceptualizing, developing and implementing e-governance programs. Countries such as Mauritius, Egypt, Morocco, Senegal, South Africa and Tunisia are leading the process to use e-governance to reflect the status of transparency, accountability and democracy within their country.

The global e-readiness revealed the regional leaders in Africa; these are Mauritius (0.5317), followed by South Africa (0.5075) and Seychelles (0.4884). The last three countries within the African region are Burkina Faso (0.1329), Mali (0.0925) and Niger (0.0661). Nigeria (0.2758) was at the 139th position out of 191 UN members. This reveals the weakness of e-governance within the country. Statuses of some countries in Africa are as expressed in Table 2 below:

Table 2: E- Governance Readiness Ranking of Some Countries in Africa

Features	Mauritius	South Africa	Nigeria	Niger	Ghana	Senegal
E-government Index	0.5317	0.5075	0.2758	0.0661	0.2866	0.2238
E-government Position (191)	52	58	139	174	133	153

Source: UNPAN, 2005

In 2001, Botswana's National Assembly took a first step in using information technology to promote good governance in Africa. With the assistance of UNDP, the legislature's Office of the Clerk has set up a computer information system to integrate document management to enhance public access to information from the National Assembly and the House of Chiefs. The project includes two elements: an intranet facility for the Office of the Clerk and a human resource management system for Members of Parliament and the House of Chiefs. As the Clerk of the National Assembly puts it "the project fulfills one of the Office's key priorities: -making information available- and provides a good foundation for the Office to transform itself into a more efficient service provider" (Dandjinou, n.d.)

In Nigeria, some state governments as part of their efforts to promote e-governance and improve government service delivery have already registered their presence on the internet. Examples of such states include Lagos, Ondo, Akwa Ibom, and Jigawa states. For instance, Turaki, the governor of Jigawa State, who spoke at Administrative Staff College of Nigeria (ASCON), Badagry, Lagos, at the end of a two-day seminar on "E-Governance: A Tool for Transparency and Accountability", said with the introduction of e-governance policy in the state, he was able to record tremendous impact by resorting to decentralizing his government in order for the masses to participate in the act of governance. According to him, the state was able to break the monopoly of knowledge through the decentralization of power in order to liberate the common man from his current economic status and make governance more receptive to the people at the grassroots. The state accepted over 900 National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) members to help train some Civil Service personnel, who use e-Governance to carry out their day-to-day activities. (Ndubuisi Ugah, 2004).

Nigeria is currently making more efforts to embrace e-governance by integrating ICTs into various sectors of development including Education, Agriculture, Arts, Health, Law Enforcement, Culture and Tourism, Urban and Rural Development, Trade and Industry, Banking as well as Administration.

2.4 Challenges of e-governance in developing countries

While e-governance holds great promise across the developing nations, substantial challenges exist. The two most important issues the world must address in establishing the information society, according to Botswana's Vice-President, Seretse Khama

Ian Khama, are capacity building and infrastructure. Developing countries have a dearth of expertise, and lack ICT infrastructure, especially connecting rural areas (NGLS Roundup 125, 2005). Heeks, as cited in Coleman (2005), claims that 85% of e-government projects in developing/transitional countries are partial or total failures and Berman and Tettey assert that 'the success rate of introduced information technology systems in African state agencies has been distressingly low, and the capacity-building objectives remain largely unachieved.' It is difficult to tell what the main bottleneck is because a lot of basic aspects of good governance are not in place yet. Basic infrastructures are not in place and the cost of e-governance resources and technology seems too enormous to bear. Challenges of e-governance in developing nations according to Draper (2004) include insufficient security and privacy, inappropriate legal frameworks, impact of culture and passive attitudes and behaviors among public servants, lack of political will and inadequate technological infrastructure.

According to Berg and Winden (2002:2) governments find it hard to shift towards e-government due to the following reasons among others.

Internal Organization: E-government requires drastic organizational changes that will bring about smooth cooperation among the government agencies. For instance, if a citizen poses a complicated question by e-mail that requires the know-how of two or more government departments or organizations, the department or organizations must know how to answer it together on time.

Relation between Public and Private Sector: There is a need for cooperation between both sectors. Some public services could combine or deploy data that are colleted, stored and managed by public and private organizations. The public officers must be careful in revealing such sensitive information.

Access: Presently, not every citizen has access to internet and this can pose a problem to the development of e-government. The government might find it challenging to reach all the citizens via the internet or intranet for information production. This might conflict with the universal service provision of particularly the local government.

Identification, Security and Privacy: In order for the government to provide service to the citizens online, proper identification is required. This means that safe identification must be in place. This is quite complicated, particularly the on line payment. Even if in place, can the citizens trust the procedures?

Relations with ICT Technical Expertise: To develop, operate and maintain e-government, the technical expertise by the private sector- ICT consultants and service providers are needed. They take the lead in systems development. The risk is that the government becomes "locked in" to the chosen system, which puts them in a weak bargaining position vis-à-vis the technology supplier.

Backus (2001) investigated the challenges of e-governance for developing countries and presented a SWOT analyses, with a focus on the political, social, economic and technological aspects of e-governance. This is as demonstrated in Table 3 below.

Table 3: SWOT-Analyses e-governance

	Strength	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
Political	Combination with democratisation Reforms Internet as pull factor Modern image	Budget Cyber laws not available No problem owner within government No expertise about technology Slow decision making process Hierarchy in organisations Short term approach due to elections Integration and reform	Raise external funding Show competitive edge Transparency causes natural change of processes Reinvent government	Bureaucracy Piracy, misuse Corruption Maintaining disorder, no transparency Political instability Resistance
Social	People eager to learn IT skills Skilled people possible export product	Basic education poor: trainers needed No IT literacy Low literacy Different languages Public acceptance of self-service models Skill shortage: competition with private sector	Employment increases Education system improve People learn structural job Cheap manpower widely available Promotion of internet Better healthcare	Brain drain IT skilled people after training Resistance of people Digital divide Privacy
Technological	Negative legacy Leapfrogging possible Internet as driving (pull) factor Lack of IT standards?	Shortage IT skilled people High cost of internet Heterogeneous data Lack of IT standards? Costs of software licenses	2nd hand hardware available Use one standard	Dependency of technology

Source, Bacus (2001)

2.5 Benefits of E-governance

About a decade ago, most Western governments embraced the idea that ICT can be exploited to reinvent their own activities. It was perceived as the key to striking a more effective accommodation between efficiency, quality and democracy in governmental reform programmes (Bellamy and Taylor, 2003,5). In 1993, the Clinton / Gore administration took the initiative to develop the National Information infrastructure (NII) to enrich and exploit new electronic facilities to build a more open and participatory democracy at all levels of American government. Soon afterwards, similar initiatives came into being in other developed countries, for them not to be left behind in the information revolution (example of such countries are Europe, 1994; Japan, 1994; Canada, 1994; Australia, 1995, Singapore, 1995).

According to Cabinet Office (2006) a transformed local government system will enable services to be designed around the citizen or business, lead to a shared service culture, release efficiency through standardization and simplification as well as improve government's ability to plan and deliver ICT-enabled change. E-governance offers tremendous benefits to the citizenry, government, employees and business sector (Fernandez, 2002). Such benefits are summarized as follows (Fernandez, 2002, Coleman, 2005):

1. With e-governance, each citizen can then make contact with the government through a website where all forms, legislation, news, bulletin and other information will be available 24 by 7 (Backus, 2001), in the office, at home or on the move. With e-governance, every citizen home and abroad, potential and current investors nationally and internationally, can have access to pertinent government information and services 24 hours a day by 7 days in a week, in the office, at home or on the move. People can apply for business permits, licenses and certificates and make payments through electronic means. Databases on businesses, marriages, births, deaths, e.t.c can be made available electronically. This will result to cheaper, faster, efficient, and more responsive systems and services compared to the traditional manual means.

2. It will simplify and speed up government transactions. More transactions such as online payments, receipts and procurement can be done via electronic means with minimal staff and amenities, thereby reducing the transaction costs and increasing the revenue base.

3. E-governance delivers cheaper, better services and speedy interaction between government, and its clients (constituents, business sectors and other government agencies). Providing access to relevant information and processes, which encompass education, culture, policy and regulation, infrastructure and public facilities. World Wide Web, e-mail, local area network, internets and intranets, can be used in dissemination of government information. Electronic newsletters, promulgations, announcements, bulletins can be sent online, on time, real time to all their clients.

4. Constituents will be in involved in the decision making process. This will open up the decision making process to public scrutiny which enhances accountability. Online forum will allow for discussion on topical issues related to local government development, including draft legislation. This procedure is to ensure transparency and accountability. Providing processes for communication and promotion of governance initiatives (working

with community public opinion leaders and national media representatives)

5. Electronic procurement system will enable the local government to do its purchases through the internet, thereby simplifying the procedure for procurement and office supplies. Bidding process done through this means is usually, competitive, transparent and convenient.

6. More professional administrators, supported by standardized, electronically embedded planning, control and decision-making systems will be in place. Budgets, strategies and performance information can be published, thereby increasing the extent of accountability and transparency. This will also give opportunities for citizens to participate more directly in policy development.

7. Building up Information Systems such as Customer Information Systems (CIS), Supplier Information Systems (SIS) and Geographical Information Systems (GIS) will allow citizens, communities and other local authorities to have assess to pertinent information such as available health services, procurement procedure identification of clusters and identification of crime spots. This will make information flow freely between departments, agencies and layers within government.

8. Sharing lessons learned and best practices among local governments by replicating the practices of good governance to other local governments through an information repository that is used to share best practices.

The Cabinet Office (2006) of the United Kingdom sees a message for the future, which is quite applicable in Nigeria. There is a need for engagement:

With citizens, communities and businesses so that we understand their needs and involve them in reshaping their local public services; With Members, so that we can help them do their jobs better, as well as getting their support for change; With service departments and front line staff, so that they are actively searching out opportunities to exploit the possibilities of ICT-enablement; With our ICT and other professionals, so that they are clear about the support and infrastructure they need to provide; With local public service partners, so that we can develop a joint understanding and vision for our areas and reshape our services and infrastructures to meet local needs in the most effective and efficient ways possible; With national government and the national local government bodies, so that we can secure the national policy frameworks, infrastructure and resources that we need locally • With other local authorities, so that we can share approaches, good practice and expertise; With our suppliers, so that they can provide the goods and services we really require.

3. Methodology

The study is an empirical one, using the case study of a local government in Ogun State, namely Ado Odo / Ota. The data employed in this study include primary and secondary data. The primary data were obtained from interview and the administration of questionnaires to personnel of the local governments. The secondary data were obtained from textbooks, journals and internet materials. The researchers administered the interview and questionnaires using a face-to-face approach. Majority of the questions were structured and the questionnaires administered were collected the same day.

4. Presentation of Data and Discussion

The table below presents the data collected from the respondents.

Table 4: Responses from Questionnaire, field survey June 2006

	Ado Odo / Ota LG
Number of computers in use in all departments	8
Does your local government have a website?	No
Does your local government have internet access/connectivity?	No
Is there a Local Area Network connecting all departments?	No
Is there a connection to State government via the intranet?	No
Are there Digital Camera, Scanner and Fax in place?	No
Are there telephone and Intercom facilities?	Yes
Processing of tax / licenses/levies	Manual and computer processing
Office administration	Manual and computer processing
Financial Accounting	Manual and computer processing
Procurement	Manual and computer processing
Payroll	Manual and computer processing
Budgeting/planning	Manual and computer processing
Databases of marriages, birth, death e.t.c	Manual Processing
Services such as health and education	Manual and computer processing
Is there an Online forum where the local government interact with its constituency?	No
Is there ICT training for Staff (Top, Middle, Low)?	No

From Table 3 above, it can be inferred that the level of computerization in the local governments are generally average. The number of computers in use is 8 and there is a dearth of other ICT equipment. Equipment such as Scanners, Digital Cameras and Fax machines are unavailable except for telephones. For e-governance to commence, computers and other modern ICT equipment must be in place (software and hardware) in all departments. The incorporation of modern information technologies has the potential to streamline administrative systems and improve the delivery of government services.

The local government is not on the Web and there is no internet facility within the LG. Web plays a great role in assessing e-governance. Web site of local government encourages online forums. Online forums will provide an avenue where constituents can publicly meet with their representatives and other government officials to address public concerns. It also allows for video conferencing. Internet and e-mails allow dissemination of information about current and pending laws and other governmental regulations. Applications for business permits and remittance of taxes can be done with ease via the internet.

The processing of supplies, finances, payroll and budgets are partially computerized at Ado Odo / Ota. Office administration,

Tax filing and data on marriages, birth and death should be processed and stored manually. A sound Management Information System (MIS) including a comprehensive database helps to capture information generated from areas such as education, finance, revenue generation, planning, health, marriage, and death registration.

There are neither network connections within the local government nor connections to the state governments. Transactions with other Local governments, authorities, state and federal government can be hastened with connections via LAN and WAN. There are no ICT training programs in place for all local government personnel. Adequate training for staff in computerized information collection, processing, dissemination and other IT functions should be in place to aid the staff with their day to day activities.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusion

While e-governance holds great prospects across Nigeria, substantial challenges exist, and the vast majority of local governments in Nigeria are miles away from e-governance. In spite of these challenges, there is a need for concerted efforts by public officers at the national, state and local levels to embrace e-governance. This would build a people-centered, information society where modern technology will be used in facilitating speedy, transparent, accountable, efficient and effective processes for performing government operations, thus supporting poverty alleviation, sustainable development and increasing political sensibility.

5.2 Recommendations

Based on the cases that were studied, we hereby suggest the following.

1. The Local Governments should be mandated under law to use electronic means in government operations within a specific period of time. The Members of Parliament should formulate and debate legislation and policy concerning e-governance. An enabling law should be put in place to essentially use electronic means for delivering services online and to change their working practices. This means being able to (i) create and retain documents in electronic form; (ii) publish and exchange information via electronic means (iii) require, accept payments and issue receipts using electronic means; (iv) issue licenses, permits and certificates by electronic means; (v) answer inquiries and processes using the new technologies; and (vi) interact and transact business with the constituent, other government agencies, suppliers and its other customers.

2. Local governments should be empowered financially by State and Federal Government to bring e-governance to fruition. Government, as a matter of urgency, should fully computerize all the operations of local governments in readiness for e- government.

3. Local governments should invest in highly qualified employees to manage e-governance projects initialization, implementation, evaluation and monitoring. Human skills and capacity should be developed to manage, integrate and sustain e-governance. E-governance should be evaluated regularly in terms of its contribution to more transparent, accountable, inclusive and efficient governance.

4. During the implementation stages, Information systems such as Financial Management Information System (FMIS), Customer Information System (CIS), and

Geographical Information System (GIS) should be in place for the clients of the local government. Databases should be built up to capture all data relating to health, marriages, births, deaths etc. The government should define and control the degree of access to information by the various users.

5. Since ICT is a fast moving and changing field, it is best for the government to engage in networks with private service providers and make use of their knowledge and resources. It should involve providing skill training and community capacity building for the personnel in the various local governments. Government officials must have a clear understanding as to what they want from the e-government system. This will prevent them from being 'locked in' to the wiles and caprices of the ICT service providers

6. In order to improve government's responsiveness to the needs of businesses, civil society organizations and citizens in general, the local governments should have websites and internet connection in all it offices to establish online forums to disseminate information about current and pending laws and other governmental regulations not readily available to the electorate.

7. Seminars, training and workshop should be organized for government officials to enlighten them with the relevant knowledge on e-government. Examples of institutions engaged in training policy makers and planners are Information Technology Centre for Africa (ITCA), African Training Research Centre in Administration and Development (CAFRAD) and Covenant University, Ota.

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