Chapter 45
E-Government in Namibia

Cathrine T. Nengomasha
University of Namibia, Namibia

Wilhelm E. Uutoni
University of Namibia, Namibia

ABSTRACT

This chapter discusses e-government initiatives in Namibia. A literature review shows that worldwide most e-government initiatives at national and local government are associated with the creation of websites with the aim of enhancing access to information. Whilst most governments are at this stage, a few have moved on to the stage of providing personalised e-services. The chapter provides the physical context, e-government readiness status, including the legal framework, and the implementation of e-government in Namibia. It also looks at the public or citizens' awareness of e-government. Using desk research, the chapter presents indicators used in e-government readiness assessments from various studies to show the level of Namibia's e-government adoption. A number of the indicators reflect some of the factors that hinder Namibia's progress in e-government implementation. In Namibia's case, some of these include the low usage of ICTs and affordability. The study concludes that Namibia is still at level one of its four-phase e-government implementation strategy.

1. INTRODUCTION

Significant efforts in the adoption of e-government have been made by governments both in developing and developed countries in an effort to improve service delivery. Various definitions of e-government have been put forward but all bring out the fact that it is.*"..the use by government agencies of information technologies (such as Wide Area Networks, the Internet, and mobile computing) that have the ability to transform rela-tions with citizens, businesses, and other arms of government" (*The World Bank, 2011, [online]).

Barnard et al. (as cited in Sahraoui, 2007) state the objectives of e-government initiatives as follows:

- Better service delivery to citizens;
- Transparency;
- Empowerment through information; and
- Efficient government procurement.

The World Bank (2011) concurs that the use of information and communication technologies:

… can serve a variety of different ends: better delivery of government services to citizens, improved interactions with business and industry, citizen empowerment through access to information, or more efficient government management. The resulting benefits can be less corruption, increased transparency, greater convenience, revenue growth, and/or cost reductions [online].

Information and communication technologies (ICTs) have touched key aspect of societies and changing the way people communicate, go about their lives and conduct businesses. ICTs use in government has seen the development of e-government with governments considering its development as key strategy for good governance. The appropriate use of ICT is playing a crucial role in advancing the goals of the public sector and in contributing towards an enabling environment for social and economic growth. Increasingly the use of ICT tools and applications is leading to transformational shifts in public policy, processes and functions. E-government is contributing significantly to the process of transformation of the governments towards being leaner and more cost-effective. It is facilitating communication and improving the coordination of authorities at different tiers of government, within organizations and even at the departmental level. Furthermore, e-Government is enhancing the speed and efficiency of operations by streamlining processes, lowering costs, improving research capabilities and improving documentation and record-keeping (COMESA, n. d.). *Namibia's Fourth National Development Plan* (Office of the President, National Planning Commission (NPC), 2012.) and *Namibia Vision 2030* (Office of the President, 2004), spell out the role of ICTs in promoting good governance.

The e-Governance Policy for the Public Service of Namibia defines e-governance as "Technologies in public administrations, combined with organizational change and new skills, in order to improve public and democratic process and strengthen support for public policies" (Office of the Prime Minister, 2005a, p. 3). A Sub-National E-Government Strategy (Ministry of Regional and Local Government, Housing and Rural Development, 2008, p. 4) refers to e-government as a "new approach to sub-national government will improve the delivery of services, will increase public engagement in the decisions that affect them, and will lead to better outcomes for people and places."

Citizens have pinned hopes on e-government improving service delivery. Kloppers (2004) laments the poor service delivery at Namibia's Ministry of Home Affairs and expresses the hope that there might be a light at the end of the tunnel in the form of Government's proposed e-governance plan." In a state of the nation address, the President of Namibia, Hifikepunye Pohamba, alluded to several projects being implemented as part of *the e-Governance Policy for the Public Service of Namibia*; the main focus being on improving the delivery of appropriate, useful and relevant information and services to our citizens (Office of the President, 2011). *Namibian Public Service E-Government Strategic Action Plan* "defines a comprehensive five-year action plan to transform the delivery of information and services by the GRN through e-government" (Office of the Prime Minister, 2013, p. 5).

Namibia is a vast country of 824 265 sq. km, bordered by South Africa in the south, Angola and Zambia in the north and Botswana and Zimbabwe in the east. The country's 2011 population census enumerated 2 104 900 (National Planning Commission, 2012). Namibia's population density is about 2.5 persons per square kilometre. The society is mainly rural, with 58% of the population living in the rural areas compared to 42% in the urban areas (Government of Namibia, 2013). Namibia has a gross national income (GNI) per capita of US$4 700 (The World Bank & International Finance Corporation, 2013).

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