

Chapter 40

Major Issues Affecting Government Data and Information in Developing Countries

Saleem Zoughbi
Bethlehem University, Palestine

ABSTRACT

The ever-developing technology is multifaceted, not only in technical specifications, but also in mode, type and characteristics. New technologies are designed and produced, new ways of using these technologies also are being suggested, tested and adopted. Telecommunications and digital technology provide today remarkable smart technologies that enable people to capture, process, maintain, disseminate and store efficiently all kinds of information at very fast speed, with high degree of efficiency and correctness. Much of government data collected are continuously affected by the development in such technology. Recent trends of technology currently and for 2017 and beyond have shown that the impact of such trends will enhance the impact on the way governments handle data. This chapter presents an overview of such trends. However, a common strategy for government data should be developed in a concise way that will guide the process of dealing with the trends of modern technologies. Therefore government data platform will adopt new technologies, new hardware and software but essentially the way government data is kept and managed still remain the same, just new tools have been adopted.

INTRODUCTION

Dimensions of government data refer to the aspect or scope of an issue. The 2015-launched sustainable development goals of the United Nations (SDGFs) are quintessential for development plans, which in turn require, use, generate and maintain government data. Building and maintaining government data is so vital to the success and maintenance of good government data such that architecting it is as important as using it.

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In this chapter an overview of certain relevant issues affecting government data is presented. The issues presented are observed in many developing countries, with focus on two regions: South East Asian countries and Middle East countries, however these are valid in general for any country with different degrees of alarm and relevance.

PRIMARY DIMENSIONS OF GOVERNMENT DATA

Secure government data require essential criteria to be met. There are many, however the following four are of primary significance.

Leadership

A Very basic criterion for secure government data is having the proper effective leadership. Government data programs often face resistance both from bureaucratic forces within government with a culture of secrecy, and by actors inside and outside government who have benefitted from privileged access to data. Strong, sustained, political leadership is therefore important in overcoming resistance and giving cover to political and other risks from opening up government information.

Policy/Legal Framework

Every government should have a legal framework that governs its data, security of data, cyber legislation and laws (Headayetullah & Pradhan, 2010). Therefore government data programs should wherever possible work within and leverage existing legal codes and policies. In particular it is important to do this when data is being restructured or designed. Many developing countries may not have such legislation, but that does not exclude the significance of having a framework that is as legal as possible, even if developed by policy experts adopted informally until the government decides otherwise. Examples of such legislation may include reuse of public sector information, government copyright and freedom of information. This will help government and independent organizations responsible for these policies became strong partners and supporters of the initiative (Fokoue, Srivatsa, Rohatgi, Wrobel, & Yesberg, 2009).

Government Data Ecosystem

When government data is shared with the public, part of it is classified as open data. Experience through many government initiatives about data has demonstrated that open data initiatives are more sustainable and high-impact when such efforts use an ecosystem approach. This will result in governments to invest not only in providing data but also addressing the policy/legal framework, institutional readiness, capacity building (for government and users), citizen engagement, innovation financing and technology infrastructure.

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