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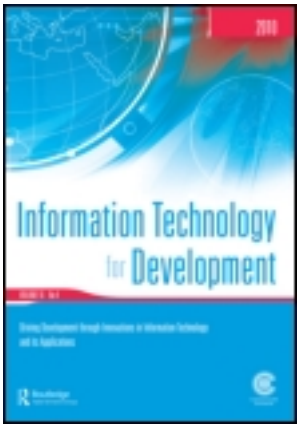

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e-Government initiatives in the developing world: Challenges and opportunities

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e-Government Initiatives in the Developing World: Challenges and Opportunities

Editorial Introduction to the Special Issue

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1. INTRODUCTION

Implementing e-government initiatives is no longer an option for governments in developing countries. It is now a crucial focus upon their day-to-day operational activities and long-term strategic decisions. From top to bottom, governments have been committed to an e-government program, big or small, as the availability and expanding use of the Internet have significantly amplified the public and business communities' expectations, tremendously pressuring these governments (at all levels) to fulfill their needs and wants.

However, many governments may not be able to move quickly enough to a more public-oriented approach (i.e., citizen and/or business centered) without having to restructure their operational day-to-day and long-term strategic decisions. This restructuring should concentrate not only on the internal level, but should also be with others such as businesses, social groups, and/or the public. When it comes to implementing e-government in developing countries, it has been reported that enormous potential still remains. For instance, there are a number of organizational determinants and processes specific to these countries that deserve to be studied further.

2. THIS ISSUE

For this special issue, five articles have been selected that discussed the challenges and opportunities facing those who have been involved in implementing e-government initiatives in developing countries around the globe.

The first article, by Chatfield and Alhujran, provides some insights into the present state of e-government developments in 16 Arab countries. Cross-country analyses of e-government Web sites and portals were conducted to assess their service delivery capabilities. The

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authors argue that there is still a wide digital divide even within these Arab countries, particularly in the development of advanced e-government service deliveries.

In a study conducted in the United Kingdom and Sri Lanka, Weerakkody, Dwivedi, and Kurunananda found out that e-government has emerged as an effective means of delivering lots of government services to its citizens and can be effectively implemented if the experience acquired by these countries is shared proficiently. Several adoption determinants common to the UK and Sri Lanka such as lack of information and communication technology (ICT) literacy, inadequate ICT infrastructure, and inability to access e-government services using local languages are discussed in detail.

The third article, by Alshawi and Alalwany, entitled "E-Government Evaluation: Citizen's Perspective in Developing Countries," claims that the importance of e-government evaluation is due to the enormous investment made by governments for delivering e-government–based services. The authors also argue that many developing countries suffer from poor utilization of their e-government initiatives.

Through a case of foreign financing decision making in Egypt, the fourth article, by Ezz, Papazafeiropoulou, and Serrano, demonstrates the importance of collaboration between government departments as a backbone for interorganizational integration. The authors argue that many challenges related to ICT adoption in developing countries can be partially attributed to the lack of standard collaboration practices.

Finally, Getao and Wausi present a case study on the adaptability of ICT to changes in student values on higher education in one of the developing countries in Africa. The case argues that these shared organizational values can be shifted through continuous organizational flexibility and support.

We would like to thank all our reviewers who have offered some excellent feedback to the manuscripts. Our special credit goes to the editor-in-chief, Sajda Qureshi, for her unremitting support and insights throughout the lengthy process of publishing this very special issue of the journal.

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