

On Ekiti's Smart Governance for Development Approach – A Reflexive Account

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ABSTRACT

The impact of Information Technology for Development (ICT4D) and Electronic Governance (EGOV) initiatives are contingent on alignment and integration with Good Governance and related Government Transformational programs. In line with this, the Government of Ekiti State, Nigeria (EKSG) recently unveiled its ICT and Digital Media Strategies with the goal of supporting the Government's Strategic "8 Point Agenda" and its "Government Transformation Agenda". Within two years of the implementation of these programmes, the EKSG has continued its transformation from one of the poorest states (in economic terms) in Nigeria to the state with the best ICT4D programmes and online presence in the country. This paper reviews the EKSG's "Smart Governance for Development Approach" (SmartGov4D) aiming to share the experience and insights into the critical success factors. The paper also provides a self-assessment to guide further refinement and development of these programmes for sustainable impact. An important lesson so far is that technocratic leadership and ability to mobilize industry partnership in addition to focus on transformational government initiatives can enable concrete outcomes in ICT-enabled governance and development initiatives.

Categories and Subject Descriptors

K.4.3 [Computers and Society]: Organizational Impacts

General Terms

Management, Measurement, Design

Keywords

Smart Governance in Ekiti, Smart Governance Framework, Transformational Government, Social Media Strategy

1. INTRODUCTION

Despite the high rate of failures characterizing ICT and e-government projects particularly in the developing regions, investments in ICT have continued to grow [12]. This paper provides a concrete example of an integrated approach to ICT-enabled inclusive development. The case of the EKSG's Smart Governance for Development program is presented here and it involves the integration of ICT Strategy, Digital Media Strategy (Social media-enabled communication for development) and

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Government Transformation Agenda in support of the government's 8 point development Agenda [9][21][22].

Given that one of the authors of this paper is directly responsible for the development and implementation of ICT and EGOV related strategies in the State, this paper aims at sharing the experience and lessons learnt so far and at the same time provide self-assessment to guide further refinement and development of these programmes. While our work has not been explicitly framed as an action research, a fundamental goal of this work is to provide the necessary input for top leadership in the state to reflect on results so far, also limitations and how to improve.

2. CONTEXT

Ekiti State was created in the South-West geo-political zone of Nigeria on October 1, 1996 [18]. With a population of about 2.75 million and an annual population growth rate of 3.2%, the state is endowed with highly skilled human capital and arguably home to the highest number of university scholars per capital in Nigeria and Africa [10]. Further details about Ekiti State can be found at <http://www.ekitistate.gov.ng>.

The State's ICT function is provided by the Directorate of ICT (DICT). Oversight for DICT is being provided by a Steering Committee (ICT-SC) comprising senior representatives of the executive, legislative and judiciary arms of government, Head of the State's Civil Service (HoS) or his representative and a representative of the State's local governments. The DICT is directly supervised by Bureau of Infrastructure and Public Utilities, Office of the Governor. DICT consists of five major units: Digital Media, Applications, Network, Strategy and Project, Customer Services and Support units and an administrative (civil service) unit.

EKSG's ICT expenditure for 2013 is about USD 4 million – about 1% of the total expenditure of the state. Comparatively, EKSG's ICT expenditure is about 13% of the ICT expenditure for city of Johannesburg in South Africa [15] and only about 4% of the smallest IT budget of a federal civilian agency (National Science Foundation) in the United States in 2013.

3. FRAMEWORK

3.1 Overview

The EKSG's Smart Governance for Development (SmartGov4D) Framework aims at delivery of an integrated ICT-related strategy and set of well-aligned programs to support the implementation of the 8-Point Development Agenda (8-PDA). The 8-PDA is the primary vehicle of the state government for achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

The SmartGov4D Framework integrates the government's ICT for Development (ICT4D), Communication for Development (C4D),

and Government for Development (GOV4D) programs to directly support the 8-PDA, see Figure 1. ICT4D initiatives broadly involves [19]: 1) the development and export of ICT products for foreign earnings; 2) the use of ICT as tools to support government operations, 3) use of ICT as economic driver with macro-level influence and 4) ICT as tools for members of the rural communities including farmers and micro-entrepreneurs to access valuable information. C4D (or participatory communication) includes informing individuals and communities on development initiatives and engaging them more in a dialog about their needs and possible solutions through a process of empowerment [5]. C4D is primarily a social process designed to seek common understanding among all participants of a development initiative as basis for concreted action [20].

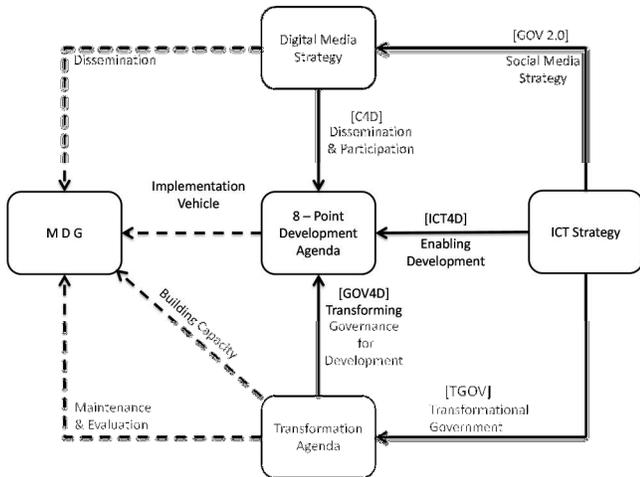


Figure 1: Smart Governance for Development Framework

GOV4D involves the use of good governance mechanisms to enable the attainment of development goals. Good governance mechanisms include promotion of pro-poor policies, public administration and civil service reform, decentralization of public services, promoting accountability and transparency, safeguarding rule of law and upholding human rights [11].

The ICT Strategy is designed to support the Transformation Agenda and Digital Media Strategy by providing policies for elaborating supporting Transformational Government (TGOV) and Social Media (GOV2.0) initiatives. TGOV involves a managed process of ICT-enabled change in the public sector, which puts the needs of citizen and businesses at the heart of the process and which achieves significant and transformational impacts on the efficiency and effectiveness of government [4].

The Transformation Agenda also aim to develop capacity of the government towards the implementation of the MDG as well as providing a measurement and evaluation framework. In addition, the digital media strategy defines a framework for disseminating information related to the 8-PDA and the MDG program.

3.2 Elements

We briefly describe in this section the four major elements of the SmartGov4D Framework.

E1) *8 Point Agenda* – The development agenda is aimed at reducing or eliminating poverty in the state [10]. The program focuses on eight core areas including Governance, Infrastructural Development, Modernizing Development, Modernizing Agriculture, Education and Human Capital

Development, Healthcare Services, Industrial Development, Tourism, and Women Empowerment.

E2) *Transformation Agenda* – To support the necessary change and government transformation to deliver the 8 Point Agenda in E1 and also lead performance improvement across government, a Transformation Program was established under the auspices of the Office for Transformation, Strategy and Delivery (OTSD) [21].

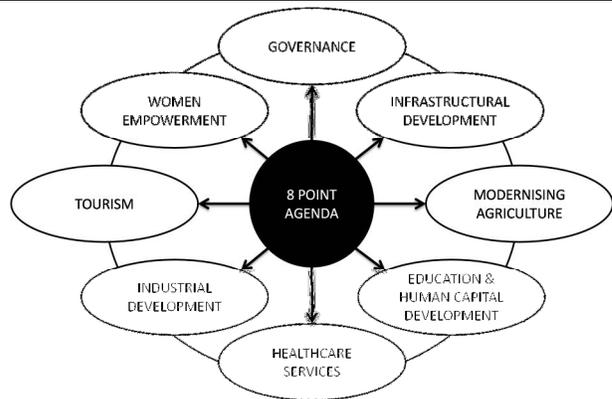


Figure 2: Ekiti State, Nigeria 8-Point Development Agenda¹

E3) *ICT Strategy* – The ICT strategy developed by DICT is designed to address the 8-Point Development Agenda with well-articulated ICT4D initiatives by supporting the enabling government transformation, in particular with respect to: 1) Internal operations and Civil Service System and 2) Public Service delivery systems [17]. Figure 3 provides a schematic description of the strategy.

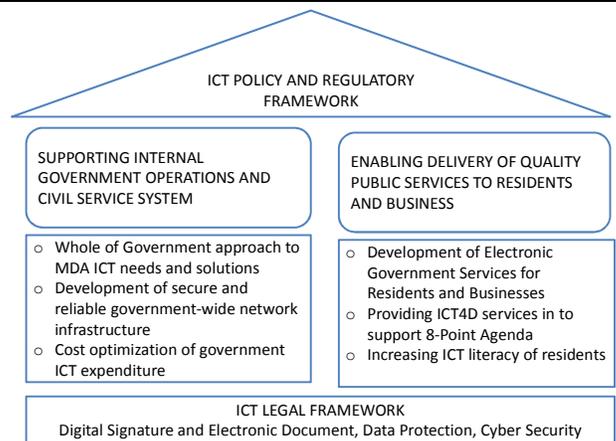


Figure 3: Ekiti State ICT Strategy Framework

E4) *Digital Media Strategy* – The digital media strategy describes the nature of the contents required for communicating EKSG activities to its people and how different kinds of digital channels will be used to engage residents and its stakeholders [22].

3.3 Alignment

In this section, we highlight how the various elements of the framework are integrated and aligned to deliver the set goals. The 8 Point Agenda is the primary vehicle for the attainment of the

¹ <http://www.slideshare.net/EkitiState/profile-of-ekiti-state>

MDG. An explicit mapping of the 8-Point Agenda to the MDG is provided in Figure 5. The alignment between the ICT Strategy to the 8-Point Agenda is maintained through the explicit justification of ICT initiatives based on the level of direct and indirect support provided by proposed initiatives to one or more of the focal developmental areas. In aligning the ICT Strategy to the Transformational Agenda, close interaction is maintained between DICT and the OTSD. Development of TGOV initiatives or ICT-enabled transformation initiatives is jointly developed by the two entities. The Transformation Agenda is directly tied to the 8 Point Agenda by the design and so maintains alignment by default. While the Strategy Unit of the OTSD provides required research and innovation to address development challenges in any of eight areas, the Delivery unit provides a tracking system for the 8-Point Agenda.

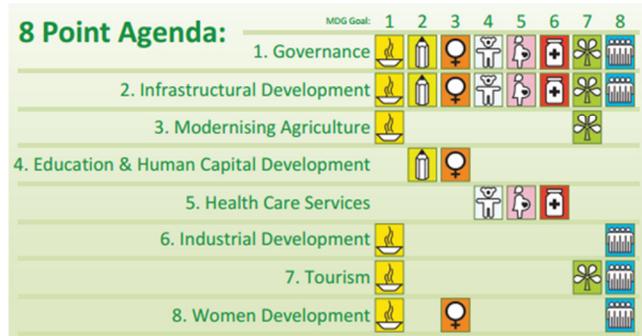


Figure 4: Mapping the 8-Point Agenda to the MDGs²

3.4 Governance

The overall SmartGov4D Framework is managed jointly by DICT and OTSD. However, oversight on the ICT strategy is provided by an ICT Steering Committee as provided for in the State's ICT Policy that has been adopted by the State Executive Council (EXCO) whose composition is described in Section 2. The team in the OTSD oversees the implementation of the Transformation and change initiatives.

4. IMPLEMENTATION

4.1 Approach

We briefly describe here the approach adopted by the EKSG in implementing some of the key initiatives associated with the SmartGov4D Framework. As shown in the framework in Figure 1, five categories of ICT-related initiatives are being implemented or planned for implementation – GOV4D, TGOV, ICT4D, GOV2.0 and COMM4D initiatives.

Prioritization of initiatives from these categories in general is based on: 1) the degree to which initiatives play enabling roles with respect to others initiatives, 2) the availability of support to initiatives by local and international development partners, 3) degree of interest by local and international private sectors organizations, where possible. Central to the implementation of these initiatives is the use of public-private-partnership schemes in line with [7] to obtain quick wins relying in particular on the

understanding of the private sector partners. This has helped to avoid the usual bureaucratic bottlenecks that usually cripple the implementation of government projects and programmes.

Specific elements of the EKSG's SmartGov4D implementation approach are: 1) *Organizational Structure*; 2) *Ensuring Strict Alignment of Initiatives with the ICT Strategy*; 3) *Developing Collaborative Agreements with Selected Private Sector Partners*

5. OUTCOMES

A number of outcomes have resulted from the implementation of the framework. Some of outcomes are highlighted below [10]: Raising Internally Generated Revenue by 466%; Ekiti State established as best practice exemplar in ICT and Governance; Established trust and partnerships with private sector; Value re-orientation of government employees as models for the society.

6. ANALYSIS

This section presents the success factors for the outcomes and achievements of the EKSG ICT initiatives so far in Section 6.1. We elaborate on some of the current challenges that the State still faces in this area in Section 6.2. In Section 6.3 some limitations in the implementation of the framework are identified and briefly discussed. Following this, we address the gaps arising from the current scope of the Framework, particularly in the areas of sustainable and Post-2015 Development Agenda [23]. This section closes with an analysis of the next steps in implementing and refining the current SmartGov4D Framework.

6.1 Success Factors

The results obtained so far are based on a combination of a number of factors including: support from international development organizations; ability to attract investments and support from foreign International Technology Organizations (e.g. from Samsung and IBM); and strong dissemination over social media channels; the five factors considered most critical to the success of EKSG ICT-related initiatives so far are: ownership by technocratic leadership; focus on transformation and good governance; development of effective Public-Private-Partnership; prioritization of the re-orientation of government employees with leadership by example, and finally community and stakeholder participation.

6.2 Challenges

Despite the relative success of the ICT-based governance and development initiatives, the EKSG and DICT in particular has had to confront a number of challenges in a number of areas ranging from financial through governance to cultural issues. Some of these challenges are Insufficient ICT Funding, Limited Appreciation of ICT Functions by Some Politicians; Conflicts of Control in the Governance of ICT Function; conflict of control with DICT on ICT Initiatives from Ministries, Departments and Agencies.

6.3 Gaps

In addition to the challenges that are yet to be fully addressed, a detailed analysis of the elements of the Framework including the 8-Point Agenda, ICT Strategy and Digital Media Strategy and their implementation reveal a number of gaps that must be filled for full potentials of the Framework to be delivered. These gaps relate to the coverage of the strategies and the level of maturity in terms of the implementation of the framework elements and level of adoption of initiatives by residents and other stakeholders. Some of major observations include:

²http://www.sparc-nigeria.com/RC/files/1.4.6_Ekiti_MDG_Factsheet_April_2012.pdf

- Re-aligning The 8 Point Development Agenda– The 8-PDA which is currently tied to the MDGs has to be re-aligned with the Post-2015 agenda .
- Developing Electronic and Mobile Government Services in ICT-enabled Government Transformation
- Maturity on the Use of Social Media for Public Interaction
- Deepening Openness in Government through Open Data Initiatives.

7. DISCUSSION

We attempt here to compare findings from our analysis with past and recent studies in the area of EGOV development to show how our case contributes to better understanding of the success factors, failure factors and challenges of implementing EGOV initiatives. A number of scholarly works such as [6][8][14], have proposed possible factors for the success and failures of e-Government and ICT initiatives as well as the challenges government face when developing e-government. For instance, Heeks identified EGOV success factors³ to include [6]: external pressure, internal political desire, overall vision and strategy, project management, change management, politics and self-interest, design, competencies, technological infrastructure. While useful, this list only provides general factors that are insufficient to guide government decision makers. These factors are similar to the ones described in this study. In addition the lack of effective public leadership and sustained commitment, inadequate training of government officials, lack of performance evaluation and monitoring, and lack of stakeholder involvement have been identified as factors that contribute to failures EGOV initiatives [14]. Our list in Section 6.1 re-validates these earlier findings. In the area of challenges to EGOV [1], our list complements these factors. In addition to the presented success factor and challenges, the following lessons have been learnt by the EKSG ICT leadership:

- 1) That through a trustworthy, committed and focused leadership an underdeveloped State could be transformed positively at least in the area of ICT.
- 2) That there is a need for the executive leadership to be hands-on in selecting and mentoring to actualize his vision.
- 3) That unbiased selection and appointment of ICT Leaders on merit is critical to achieving success in the ICT functions.
- 4) That emphasis should be placed on developing institutions and proper governance structure for the ICT functions of a State that ensures continuity and;
- 5) Development and operationalization of a well prepared ICT policy; and creation of necessary legal framework are critical to having a transformational ICT in a State.

8. CONCLUSION

We believe that the case presented in this paper offers good practices for other states in Nigeria and reveals some interesting developments in the implementation of ICT4D, EGOV and TGOV initiatives. The phenomenon of technocratic political leadership with civil society, academia and industry background can enable private-sector style efficiency in government. Our analyses of success factors, challenges and lessons provide good complementarity and specificity for some of factors already reported in literature. Finally, as major stakeholders involved in the design, development and execution of the SmartGov4D framework, analysis provided in this paper enables focused revision of the framework.

³ <http://www.egov4dev.org/success/>

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