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GOVERNMENT INFORMATION AND E-GOVERNANCE IN KENYA
(A research in progress)

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Government Information

- Information that is created, collected, processed, disseminated, or disposed of by the government.
- Information concerning government bodies and functions, (of, by and from)

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Govt. Information contd.

Includes; government policy, taxation, government expenditure, the constitution, justice system, the law of the land, the court system, citizens' rights, consumer protection, education, industry, health, electoral system, travel information among others.

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Government Information and ICTs .

- ICTs have become important in the production, management & dissemination of information.
- Growth of the Internet has given impetus to the capacity of ICTs
- This has led to a phenomenon known as the *global information society*

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E-governance contd.

1. Millions of Websites set up containing public and private information
2. Governments not left behind: Using websites and ICT to deliver services and communicate information to citizens, contributing to the growth of *e-governance.*

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Definitions of e-governance

- use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) to **improve** the activities of public sector organisations (Heeks: 2002).
- the use of information and communication technologies (ICT) and particularly the internet, as a tool to achieve **better** government (OECD: 2003).

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Advantages of E-governance

- Cheaper than print
- Reaches many people at the same time
- Allows faster distribution
- Leaner, more effective & efficient govt. (OECD), freeing staff from routine tasks
- Reduces cost, inefficiency, inconvenience
- More information can be made accessible

Advantages of E-governance contd.

- Information accessible in remote areas
- Empowers citizens thru access & use of information (Information is power)
- Easier & more cost effective to get feedback

Global Situation

- Leading Nations in E-governance include USA, Denmark, UK, Sweden, Singapore, South Korea, Taiwan (UN:2004)
- Some active government websites include:

a) USA: www.**usa**.gov/

i) The Federal Depository Library Program (FDLP)

http://www.hdpl.org/webinfo/vgovernment.html
Established by Congress to create public access to govt. information.

Global Situation contd.

White House : http://www.whitehouse.gov, http://www.firstgov.gov/

b) Canada PM office: *http://www.pm.gc.ca In English & French*

c) France: http://www.premier-ministre.gouv.fr/en/ (in 4 Languages)

d) Taiwan: www.gio.gov.tw

e) Singapore: http://www.gov.sg/

Global Situation contd.

f) Italy http://www.palazzochigi.it/index.asp

g) South Africa: www.gov.za

h) Tanzania: www.tanzania.go.tz *(Swa/Eng)*

i) Uganda: http://www.statehouse.go.ug/government.htm

Global Situation contd.(Political Parties)

- Labour Party (UK): http://www.labour.org.uk/home
- Republican Party (USA): http://www.gop.com/
- Democratic Party (USA): http://www.democrats.org/
- Le Front National (France): http://www.frontnational.com/
- Mouvement pour la France: http://www.pourlafrance.fr/

Global Situation contd. (Political Parties)

- Partido Socialista Obrero Español (Spain):www.psoe.es
- Partido Popular (Spain): www.pp.es
- Unione dei Democratici Cristiani e di Centro (Italy):http://www.udc-italia.it
- Christlich Demokratische Union Deutschlands (Germany): http://www.cdu.de

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Global situation contd-Africa

- ANC (South Africa): http://www.anc.org.za/
- ZANU-PF (Zimbabwe): http://www.zanupfpub.co.zw/
- Chama Cha Mapinduzi (Tanzania): http://www.ccmtz.org/
- National Resistance Movement (Uganda): http://www.nrm.ug/
- Forum for Democratic Change (Uganda): http://www.fdcuganda.org/

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Global Situation contd.

- In Malaysia, they have an ambitious project called the *Multimedia Super Corridor* (MSC).
- The program has wired up the country for efficient public information dissemination.
- Aims at rural communities especially farmers, housewives and students (started with the IFLA donation that Kenya missed!) (Microsoft corporation: 2002).

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Global Situation contd.

- South Africa has set up rural digital villages throughout the country to bring government information closer to the people.
- They are computer resource centers ran by local community members trained in IT management skills. (Microsoft corporation: 2002).

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Global Situation contd. Africa

- Increase in the number of African governments setting up websites
- Most are not taking full advantage of web facilities to provide information and services to citizens
- Most websites are rudimentary with basic or very little information
- Most are not interactive.

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Kenyan Situation

- Slow off the blocks.
- Many still have to walk to govt offices from far
- Lost and missing files, untidy offices, tempers flare, frustration, lost time.
- Corruption thrives in such environments
- ICT in governance still in its infancy.
- Liberalisation of technology sector led to ICT explosion.
- But the cost of accessing technology is falling.

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Kenyan situation contd.

- Prices of mobile telephony has fallen, proliferation of cybercafes and telecenters in most urban centers
- Quality of services improving
- The GoK has a website (www.kenya.go.ke)
- It is basic, not interactive.
- Directorate of e-government created in 2004 ((http://www.e-government.go.ke/)
- To deliver technology based public sector services.
- Launched a project connecting all public offices in NRB with fibre optic cables (GCCN).

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Kenyan situation contd.

- GCCN will increase access to govt. information through the internet.
- Data center for the govt. being planned
- DeG has been working on a draft Electronic Transaction Bill (with funding from USAID).
- Use of mobile phones for delivery of services
- P3, KRA tax returns forms, passport application and PSC forms can be downloaded online

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Kenyan situation contd.

- The PSC launched an integrated online recruitment and selection system last year.
- KNEC has been providing results online/mobile telephony for the 2007 examinations
- HELB balances can be checked online.
- Weather broadcasts now done on the government websites.
- KRA allows importers of goods to clear them online.

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Kenyan situation contd.

- Wanted criminals posted on Kenya Police website
- Abstract forms available on Kenya Police website
- SMS services for voting status launched in 2007
- International jobs also provided online.

Coming Soon

- Integrated tax management system
- 3rd generation identity card
- E-passport

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The Kenyan Situation: political parties

Key political Parties are on the web:

- ODM: http://www.odm07.com/ : last updated in January 2008
- KANU: http://www.kanuonline.com/ last updated in January 2008
- ODM Kenya: http://www.odmk.org/ Market place for various items.

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The Kenyan Situation: political parties contd.

- DP: http://www.dp-kenya.org/ last updated before 2007
- PNU: http://www.pnuparty.com/ last updated before 2007 elections
- Narc: www.narc-kenya.org last updated 2006, site closed, needs password, username (For a public organisation?).

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The Way Forward

1) Improve the government's web presence. The following can be made available via the web:
a) Government docts in full text
b) Country's laws and constitution
c) Government forms and applications
d) Government contact details
e) Online applications
f) Voter & civic information, tele-voting

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The Way Forward contd.

e) E-services for Business
g) E-services for foreign nationals.
h) Frequently Asked Questions
i) News links to local media
j) Facilities for feedback
k) GIS, traffic, travel, tourist. Weather information
l) Online public sector vacancies

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The Way Forward contd.

2) **Need for coordinated policy & legislation:** framework or blue print that provides information work with operational guidelines.
3) **Need for a central coordinating body**: for consistency & efficiency in the utilisation of resources e.g DeG.
4) Educate leaders on capabilities of ICTs
6) Educate citizens (65% ready youth) e.g Make ICT education and infrastructure compulsory in schools

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The Way Forward

7) Prioritise resource allocation for ICTs infrastructure, public/private initiatives
8) Professionals, educ. Inst'tions & prof. associations to be more active in lobbying promoting use of ICTs.
9) Digital information access points e.g at Post offices, govt. offices, chiefs camps, churches, KNLS

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Challenges

1) **Change Management:**
- Computer error messed the 2007 KSCE results
- The PSC tricksters
- Address capacity building
- Learning to use the new techs is slow/frustrating for officer and citizens.

2) **Disparities and alienation:** Digital/content divide, information rich/poor
3) **Literacy**: ICTs do not make up for illiteracy

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First things first contd.

4) **Language Barriers**: Most govt. information is in English: Need to have Swahili translations on the web (see Canada, TZ, France).
5) **Ignorance/information seeking culture**
- Educate people on the importance of information
- Propagate a culture of information and knowledge creation, processing, seeking, learning and service for the common good
6) **Poverty**: ICTs come at a cost

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First things first contd.

7) "Power up" the rural areas

8) Government attitudes

- Information programmes among the first victims of cost cutting measures
- Authoritarian insecurities: fear of enlightened citizenry
- Govts benefiting from ignorance (manipulation, intimidation, carrot and stick politics)

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Conclusion

- E-govt leads to more informed & empowered citizens, with more opportunities, choices and freer democratic societies
- Sensitise stakeholders on the capabilities of ICT in inform dissemn
- Promote egovt. thru lobbying, advocacy etc.

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Conclusion

- Put in place physical and legislative infrastructure
- An informed public is a valuable asset in successful democratic societies.

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