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Nagy K. Hanna

Transforming Government and Building the Information Society

Challenges and Opportunities
for the Developing World

 Springer

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Preface

This book argues for the need to merge governance reform, public sector modernization, and information society development with national policies and strategies for ICT, e-government, and e-society. The book draws on my 35-year journey in international development, primarily with the World Bank. It is motivated by the promise of the revolutionary advances in information and communication technologies to address development challenges facing poor countries and emerging economies, particularly those concerning governance and building the information society.

Transforming Government and Building the Information Society builds on the integrated framework of information and communication technology-enabled development, as presented in my book *e-Transformation: Enabling New Development Strategies*, published by Springer in 2009. It focuses on ICT-enabled innovation in the public sector and thus complements my book *Enabling Enterprise Transformation: Business and Grassroots Innovation for the Knowledge Economy*, also published by Springer in 2009. Together, these three books present a trilogy of a still-unfolding ICT-enabled development paradigm.

Transforming Government and Building the Information Society presents a holistic approach to meet the long-term challenge of strategically integrating new ICT technologies into development. Even a premier development institution such as the World Bank has had difficulty in integrating the new technologies into development strategies and governance reform. Despite superior payoffs from such integration, most incentives within aid agencies and developing countries reinforce a split between development practitioners and technology specialists. Additionally, integration challenges have been neither obvious nor easy to overcome despite growing awareness that advances in information and communication technologies represent a techno-economic paradigm shift demanding strategic responses.

Strategic and holistic approaches are needed to realize the potential of ICT to reforming governance and transforming public agencies and services. Inserting ICT into development thinking and governance reform requires overcoming major challenges. The gap is wide, as ICT specialists fail to speak the mainstream development language, and policy makers, public sector reformers, and governance specialists view ICT as an add-on or marginal technical fix to development. This gap is shared across developing countries, aid agencies, think tanks, and academia. The perspectives of governance studies and ICT science need to be integrated. When effectively

leveraged, ICT tools can slash the costs of public services, enhance access and quality of services, reduce the burden of regulatory compliance, and render public agencies more transparent and accountable. But none of that will happen without fundamental change in thinking about ICT, governance, and development. Our thinking about the future of government has to catch up with the potential of our new tools and the imperatives of 21st century knowledge economy. Public sector reformers and ICT specialists must communicate across the divide and manage the transformations brought about by a new techno-economic paradigm.

Development theory and practice cannot afford to miss or mismanage the most powerful and transformative technology of our time. The new information and communication technology can be central to building transparent government and an inclusive information society. It can provide a renewed sense of excitement and hope about governance and public sector reform. But ICT is not a magic bullet to be pursued by the technologists in isolation of development and governance practice. The ongoing technological revolution must lead to a new conception of government and governance that integrates ICT into all development options and reforms. This book offers a number of frameworks and tools to advance this integration agenda.

This book was inspired by the former President of the World Bank, James Wolfensohn, who advocated a comprehensive approach to development where ICT can be a powerful transformer. Thanks to Mohamed Muhsin, former CIO of the Bank, I had the opportunity to test many of the ideas of this book while developing the pioneering, Bank-financed e-Sri Lanka Program (Hanna, 2007a, 2008). Through the e-Sri Lanka Program, I learned with and from Milinda Moragoda, then minister of economic reform, science, and technology; Lalith Weeratunga, secretary to the president of Sri Lanka and a passionate advocate of a reengineered government; Manju Haththotuwa, the first CEO of Sri Lanka's ICT Agency; and the Agency's current leadership team—Reshan Dewapura (chief operating officer), Jayantha Fernando, and Wasantha Deshapriya.

The book draws on the insights and contributions of many colleagues in developing countries, independent international consultants and academics, and colleagues at the World Bank. I acknowledge the excellent comments of Professor Richard Heeks, University of Manchester; Professor J.-P. Auffret, George Mason University; Professor Sandor Boyson, University of Maryland; and Silvana Rubino-Hallman and Larry Meek, Inter-American Development Bank. From the World Bank, I acknowledge the contributions of Eduardo Talero, Randeep Sudan, Philippe Dongier, Samia Melhem, Christine Qiang, Arsala Deane, and Chew Kuek. I owe special thanks to Peter Knight and Joseph Del Casino, independent consultants, for commenting on the draft. A final thanks to the editorial staff of Springer, Elias Carayannis and Nicholas Philipson, and Leah Paul of Integra.

The book's intended audiences are mainstream development practitioners and ICT strategists. The book aims to bridge the gap between the disciplines of ICT and economic development. Bridging the gap requires mutual understanding and movement by both groups. For academics and students of ICT and development policy, this book can be used as a textbook. It offers an integrated framework that guides our inquiry into the future of government in development and is enriched

by lessons of experience. For practitioners, including aid agency practitioners and program designers in developing countries, the book offers a guide to translating their visions of ICT-enabled information society and government transformation into sound strategies and investment programs. It contributes to the “how to” literature—bridging the gap between theory and practice, between vision and reality.

My hope is that this book will provide the impetus for a more active dialog and partnerships among development researchers and practitioners concerned with governance reforms and information society, on the one hand, and, on the other, ICT for development, e-government, information systems and innovation specialists who are concerned with using the new technologies to transform government and build an inclusive information society. The book is as much a plea for interdisciplinary communication as it is about how policy makers and development practitioners may frame the possibilities and lead the next phase of transformation.

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