e-Governance in the Philippines and lessons to Nepal

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1. Introduction

Experiences of the developed and newly industrialized countries have already shown that a country can not prosper until and unless it excels the Information and Communication Technology (ICT). The ICT has a vital role to play in ensuring quality service to the people in low cost and in less time. In essence, it is a necessary condition to ensure good governance through e-governance in a country. As it is widely accepted that government in the developing countries costs too much, delivers too little, and is not sufficiently responsive or accountable the use of ICT for e-governance largely addresses these shortcomings. e-Governance improves processes, connects citizens, and builds interactions with and within civil society.

ICT development is acknowledged as a powerful means to ensure effective and affordable service delivery in many countries. With the integration of ICT in development process, some developing countries have achieved significant improvement in service delivery for the poorest segments of their society. It also promotes rapid economic development, improves administrative efficiency and provides greater opportunities for participation by people in the affairs of government and community (www.hlcit.gov.np/pdf/workshop2007.pdf)।

e-Governance can make functioning of the government more efficient and effective. One has to acknowledge the fact that developing country (DC) governments have been using IT for more than 40 years and IT was basically used in automating the

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internal workings of government by processing data. However, Information and Communication Technology (ICT) is more advanced and powerful than IT and it supports and transforms external workings of governance by processing and communicating data.

e-Governance normally encompasses all ICTs, but the key innovation in this regard is computer networks – from intranets to the Internet – creating a wealth of new digital connections between and among governments, non government agencies and private sectors . As a consequence, the focus grows from just parts of e-administration to e-citizens, e-services and e-society. ICTs become an essential part of more and more governance initiatives and are also recognized as a key lever to change (Heeks, 2001).

The South East Asian nation, the Philippines is no exception in this regard. It is a developing island country putting too much emphasis on ICTs by realizing the fact that the country's future prosperity and competitiveness lie only on its advancement. The Philippines has gone much ahead in the field of ICT and e-governance in comparison to Nepal and the Philippine experiences can be lessons to Nepal in its endeavor to overall development through excellence in the field of ICT in general and e-governance in particular.

This paper highlights theoretical aspect of e-governance along with status of the e-governance in the Philippines. Lessons are tried to be drawn from the Philippine experience by stating the condition of ICT and e-governance in Nepal. The paper is summed up with conclusion.

2. Conceptual clarity of ICT, e-government and e-governance

2.1 ICT

"Information and Communications Technology - or technologies (ICT) is an umbrella term that includes all technologies for the communication of information. It encompasses: any medium to record information (whether paper, pen, magnetic disk/ tape, optical disks - CD/DVD, flash memory etc.); and also technology for broadcasting information - radio, television; any technology for communicating through voice and sound or images- microphone, camera, loudspeaker, telephone to cellular phones. At present, it is apparently culminating to information communication with the help of Personal Computers (PCs) networked through the Internet through information technology that can transfer information using satellite systems or intercontinental cables. Indeed, information technology (IT) has become a kind of a hub for communicating information, most often using computers. But, with an expanding fraction of human population getting empowered to share information it may not continue" to be so (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Information_Communication_technology). ICT can not be taken as an end in themselves and it works as part of a wider systemic 'package' (Heeks, 2001).

ICT provides three basic change potentials for good governance. The first is automation, which has to do with replacing current human-executed processes that involves accepting, storing, processing, outputting or transmitting information. The automation of existing clerical functions falls under this category. The next is informatisation, which is related with supporting current human-executed information processes. Activities like supporting current processes of decision making, communication, and decision implementation are categorised under informatisation. The last one is transformation, which deals with creating new ICT-executed information processes or supporting new human-executed information processes. Creating new methods of public service delivery is an inherent feature of transformation. Use is changing from automation to informatisation and transformation. As the change potential of ICTs increases, they deliver ever-greater benefits and enable ever-greater changes in the process of governance (ibid).

Use of ICT by government can bring benefits both internally and externally. Internally, it provides benefits such as better staff motivation or greater political control or an improved public image. Externally, it helps deliver cheaper, better services to those who depend on government. In totality, ICT helps outstandingly to promote efficiency and effectiveness of the government.

Traditionally, ICT has been used by the governments for the purpose of automation by replacing clerical labor processes with their digital equivalent. However, achievement of financial cost-cutting goal is questionable. In the developed countries, replacing costly humans with cheap ICT may cut costs, but in developing countries, replacing cheap humans with costly ICT is unlikely to be justified on financial cost grounds. Therefore, ICT needs to be justified and understood in the context of a broader vision and necessity for e-Governance (ibid).

2.2 e-Government

e-Government refers to the use of ICT, particularly the internet, as a tool to achieve better government (UNeGov.Net-Shool-Concepts-7 cited in Shakya,2007).

"e-government is the use of information and communications technologies (ICT) to transform the traditional government by making it accessible, transparent, effective and accountable" (Shakya et al cited in http://www.nepalnews.com.np/contents/2007/englishweekly/spotlight/apr/apr13/article.php)

Richard Heeks (2001) defines e-government as the use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) to improve all activities of public sector or organizations . One of the merits of e-government is that it establishes a relationship between government officials and citizens, providing greater access to government information and services by making the government accessible online. Besides, it enhances peoples' participation by enabling them to interact more conveniently with government officials, such as by requesting government services and filing required documents through website and by increasing government accountability by making its operations more transparent, thereby reducing the opportunities for corruption and supporting development goals by providing business, rural and traditionally underserved communities with information, opportunities and communications capabilities (ibid).

e-Government is acknowledged as a process of transforming government. Such process includes planning, political will and a sustained dedication of resources for the promotion of ICT. e-Government can not be ensured with the mere purchase of advanced technology or the direct automation of complex procedures until and unless it can increase participation level of the citizen there by bringing about effectiveness of government. It is worth mentioning that introduction of technology can not change the mentality of bureaucrats who do not view the citizen as valued customer of government or an important participant in decision-making (Shakya et al cited in http://www.nepalnews.com.np/contents/2007/englishweekly/spotlight/apr/apr13/article.php)**.**

The importance of e-government can be justified because of different reasons. First, it support economic growth and reduces poverty including in remote rural areas by improving ICT accessibilities. It is helpful to build a citizen–centered, service-oriented, public-participated government with efficient, accountable, transparent and performance based government system. Moreover, it is the most democratic and non-discriminating platform for all races, ethnic groups, religion, region and socio-political ideologies. In addition, it assists governments to fulfill their mandates formulating a new vision of how government views citizens, employees and businesses. Most importantly, because of e-government the concept of any time and any where government (virtual government) concept is possible and it helps transform government workers into empowered knowledge workers.

e-government covers different facets of governance. They are as follows

- e-Administration which is concerned with improving government processes.
- e-Citizen, whose emphasis is on connecting citizens

- e-Society, which helps in building external interactions
- e-Application., which covers the following:
  - Government to Government (G2G)
  - Government to Citizens (G2C)
  - Government to Business (G2B)

2.3 e-Governance

"e-Governance is the seamless integration of information and communication technologies (ICT) and internet technology in the government workflow to enhance the efficiency, effectiveness, transparency and accountability of information and transactional exchanges within government between governments and government agencies of national, municipal and local levels, citizens and businesses. e-Governance empowers citizens through rightly and timely access and use of information and government e-services"(Shakya,,2007). One of the merits of e-Governance is that it helps get rid of the barrier of geographical diversity and makes government services handy to all citizens at villages who are even not connected by roads and opens up many opportunities. This is possible through internet connectivity available either through wireless communication, fiber optic cables, dial-ups, VSATs or whatever other medium" (ibid).

There may be different objectives of e-governance. However, two most important objectives are to ensure quality service to the people and to have efficient government. In this regard, the aim is to simplify governance for all stakeholders, namely government, citizens, businesses and its employees. Most importantly, the use of ICTs can connect all three parties and support processes and activities. The e-governance helps to satisfactorily fulfill the public's needs and expectations by simplifying the process and interaction through various online services. The use of ICTs in government operations facilitates speedy, transparent, accountable, efficient and effective interaction with the public, citizens, business and other agencies (ibid).

3. e-Governance in the Philippines

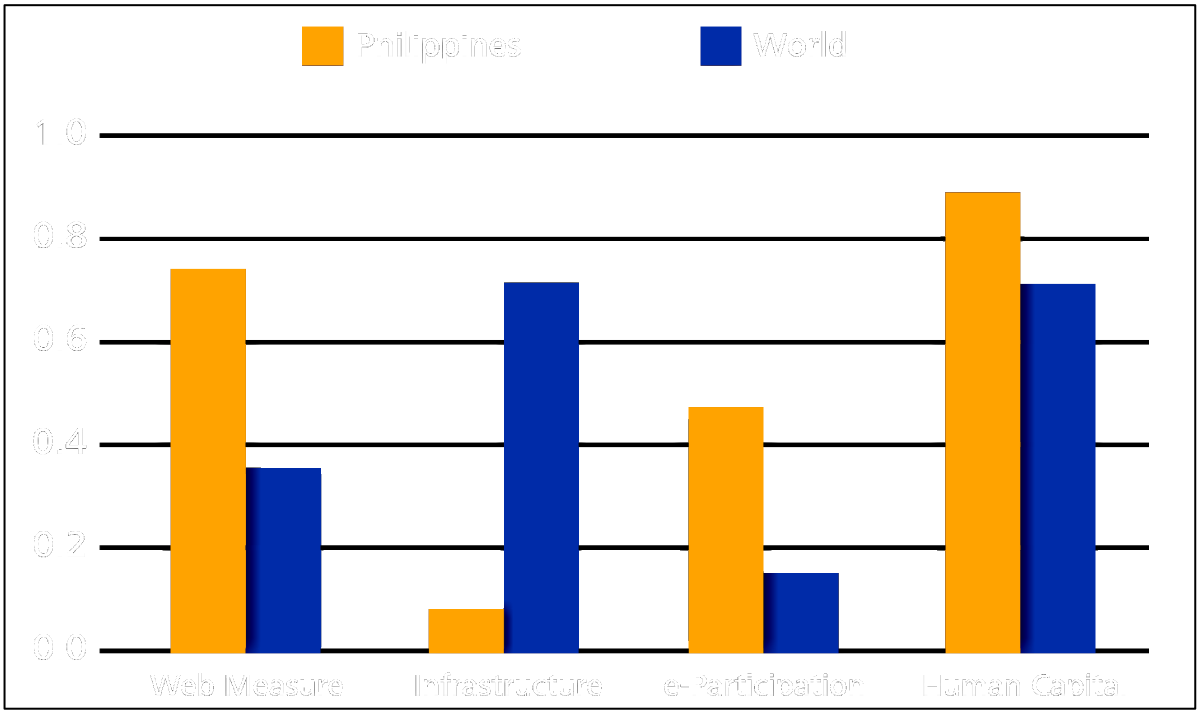
The Philippines is an archipelago of 7,108 islands with a total land area of 300,000 km² located in South East Asia. The 11 largest islands contain 94% of the total land area. The largest of these islands is Luzon with an area of about 105,000 km². The next largest island is Mindanao with an area of about 94,600 km². The archipelago is around 800 km from the Asian mainland and is located between Taiwan and Borneo. Real GDP growth remained 7.3% in the year 2007. Economic growth will average 5.7% a year in 2008-12. Private consumption will be the primary driver of the economy during the forecast period, although there will also be a modest acceleration in investment growth relative to the average rate recorded during the past few years. GDP per head (at market exchange rates) in the Philippines remained at an estimated US$1,600 in 2007. It is expected to rise to over US$2,400 in 2012.

The Philippine government has accorded the highest priority to Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in its effort for overall development of the country. The government has already put in place e-commerce law. Government Information System Plan and ICT Strategic Roadmap have already been prepared and come into action. To materialize the plan and road map, the Commission on Information and Communication Technology (CICT) has been created in 2004 and made very active to achieve its mandate through e-governance. Moreover, e-Government Fund has been set up to expedite the ICT related agenda. The CICT is mainly responsible for ICT policy, planning, coordination and implementation. The CICT Visions a society where citizens have access to information and communication technologies that provides quality education, efficient government service, sustainable economic development, and a better way of life.

3.1 Comparative position of the Philippines on e-governance

e-Governance Vision of the Philippines is to achieve a smart and ICT-competent government providing innovative and efficient on-line services that respond to the needs of citizens and institutions worldwide. According to the 2008 UN e-Government Readiness Survey Ranking, out of 192 countries, the Philippines falls on 66^{th} position. In terms of Web Measure Index, it is at par with the developed countries in the world. According to the 2005 UN e-Government Readiness Survey, the Philippines is in 17^{th} position out of 179 countries in terms of Web-Measure Index.

World Average comparisons



It is interesting to note that around 98.6% Local Government Units (LGUs) are furnished with web site and 92.5% National Government agencies are equipped with website facilities. Moreover, the quantum jump of the Philippines in terms of its advancement in the IT sector can be felt by knowing the fact that 142 government agencies are connected with online services and 10 agencies do have on line payment services.

Following Online services are being made available by the government in the Philippines:

- *e*-Census (National Statistics Office)
- *e*-Procurement (DBM-Procurement Service)
- Business Name Registration (Dept of Trade & Industry)
- Income Tax Filing (Bureau of Internal Revenue)

Besides, Mobile governance is also in practice in the country. It covers delivery of public services through mobile technology. In this regard, 49 agencies have some form of SMS-backed services.

3.2 On-line governance in the Philippine Civil Service Commission

One of the most important and visible functions of the Philippine Civil Service Commission (PCSC) is to conduct examinations - the first step in the process of selecting prospective civil servants. Examinations are conducted in pursuance of the constitutional mandate that appointments in the civil service, except to certain positions defined by law, shall be made according to merit and fitness to be determined as far as practicable through competitive examinations. Those who will pass the civil service examinations are conferred civil service eligibility -- a basic requirement for entrance to government service. Every year since 1900, the PCSC has been administering examinations for entrance in the government. In the past seven years, the PCSC administered at least five examinations a year to some 5,000 to 500,000 examinees nationwide.

The large volumes of examinees who take the examinations every year underscore the important role of the PCSC in keeping professionalism and competence in the bureaucracy. Starting in 1967, the examination system began to use computer technology, initially, in the processing of test results. The year 1990- PCSC acquired mid-range computers to beef up its capability to handle more test data and process them at a much faster rate such that results were released in only about six months.

3.2.1 The computer-based testing system

Computer-Assisted Testing (CAT) is the Philippine Civil Service Commission (PCSC)-developed software program designed to administer the PCSC's Career Service Professional or Sub-professional examinations. It is aimed at revolutionizing the pencil and paper types of civil service professional and sub-professional examinations. Basically, the system provides an individual, through a one-stop process, the opportunity to acquire civil service eligibility in an instant or within one hour. Further, the system improves the efficiency and flexibility of career service tests. It facilitates the systematic storage, updating and retrieval of pertinent examinee data as well as checking and scoring of examinee answers to test questions from computerized software. It is also able to generate reports of ratings and statistics of the test scores. With its user-friendly features, one does not even have to be computer literate to avail of this mode of examination.

The design of the CAT system is so simple that even those who do not have any experience in operating computers can easily take the test. It is equipped with user-friendly features that can be easily understood and appreciated by the examinee. One unique characteristic of the CAT is the tutorial session which the examinee may choose to undergo before proceeding to the actual test.

The "practice test" is a ten-minute, ten-item test which enables the examinee to familiarize himself with the instructions in taking the test. Because of this, the CAT is administered with minimum supervision from a test proctor or administrator.

The CAT System aims to :

- provide an individual, through a one-stop process, the opportunity to acquire a civil service eligibility at a time he/she may need it for immediate employment in the government;

- facilitate the evaluation and processing of examination results (as compared to the paper-and-pencil test which took at least a month before the results are released); and

- make the administration of Career Service test flexible and convenient because the examinee does not have to wait for the next scheduled paper-and-pencil examination.

CAT is operationalized in all 14 PCSC regional offices throughout the Philippines. Each of the regional offices has at least 20 computers dedicated for the CAT. The CAT is conducted on a one-on-one basis or for a group setting depending on the number of computers available. The PCSC plans to expand the applicability of the CAT. At present, the CAT only carries the Career Service Professional and Sub-professional Examination. The other examinations that the PCSC regularly administers such as the Competitive Examination for the Local Scholarship Program, Foreign Service Officer Qualifying Examination, Fire, Jail and Penology Examinations are still using the paper-and-pencil test mode. The PCSC hopes to use the CAT technology in all these examinations.

3.2.2 Walk-in-type examination

One who wishes to work in the government but has no Certificate of Civil Service Eligibility can simply walk-in the PCSC office or any of its regional offices and apply for an examination. After the test, he can wait for a few minutes for the result of his test. In latter part of 1990, the concept of a **"walk-in" type of examinations** started to take shape. The walk-in examination system is envisioned to be an **"instant test"**

3.2.3 The Computer-Based Test Bank (Examination Generation System)

Early in 1991, the computer-based test development system or the Examination Generation System (EGNS) was developed. The EGNS was designed for test item banking, assembly of test forms, and generation of equivalent test forms. The test questions in the test bank are classified according to the subject area, specific skills to be measured and the difficulty level. The questions drawn from the test bank are "assembled" to make a test form. On each examination schedule, a different test form is used to maintain variety and confidentiality of the test questions.

3.2.4 The job opportunity bank system (jobs)

Through the Job Opportunity Bank System or JOBS, clients may take a peek into the various vacancies in different government offices. Facilities are installed in CSC offices nationwide. This on-line job search facility has a systematic method of classifying information by agency, by salary grade or by location of office. The database is continuously updated to reflect the turnover of positions as well as newly created positions.

3.2.5 The databank of individuals barred (DIBAR)

DIBAR contains names of persons blacklisted from taking career tests due to falsification of application papers, impersonation and other similar felonies. It contains as well names of individuals banned from re-entering the government service because of administrative penalties.

3.2.6 The CSC personal information data based system

It stands for Civil Service Commission-Personnel Information Database System. It is a web-based system that will handle the records of all civil servants. It stores and manages all related personnel information on all civil servants immediately upon their entry to the service and throughout their tenure in government.

3.2.7 The MAMAMAYAN MUNA, HINDI MAMA NA Program

It is a nationwide client-satisfaction program which attempts to instill courteous and efficient behavior among public servants. It addresses the need for behavioral reforms in the bureaucracy, particularly in the manner by which civil servants deal with the public. Currently it incorporates the use of the following support systems:

a) Mamamayan Muna Call Center

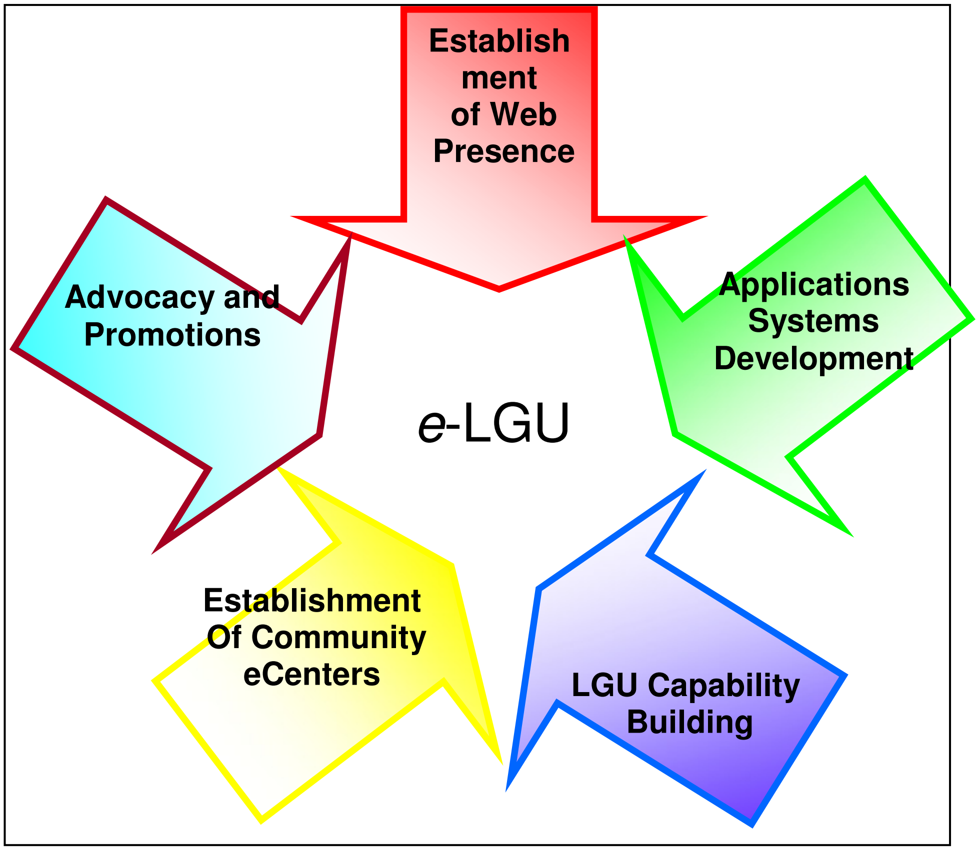
The Center is equipped with an answering machine which can receive or accommodate calls or messages from the reporting public for the rest of the day or even after office hours.

b) Text-CSC Project

The newest campaign in enhancing the entire government service delivery machinery through better government-public interaction, linkage and connectivity involves the use of the texting technology craze to push for better service and interaction with their clients

3.3 eLGU Program

eLGU program is program to promote electronic governance in Local Government Units (eLGU) The major objective of the eLGU Program is to enable LGUs to make a head start in adopting computerization by empowering them to embrace the technology and apply the benefits of ICT to local governance towards an improved quality of public service. The following diagram is self-explanatory to understand different components of eLGu.



3.4 eSerbisyo

E-Serbisyo is another effort of the government of the Philippines in it mission to drive the country to achieve the goal of e-governance in the country. e-Services Portal (eSerbisyo) provides a single-entry point for accessing government services. It facilitates efficient interface between the government and the citizens. It also makes convenient for the general public to transact business with the government.

3.4.1 Salient Features of eSerbisyo

E-Serbisioy is citizen –centric/Customer –Focused program which is designed around citizens' needs. It does not have to follow government hierarchy. It's Contents organized around customer groups and topics, instead of agency names. E-Serbisiyo cross-agency portals include: senior citizens, students, people with disabilities, overseas foreign workers, exporters, etc.

3.4.2 Perceived Benefits of eSerbisyo

There are different benefits which can be gained out of this system. First of all, it brings about a responsive and effective government by streamlining business processes and reducing red tape by avoiding the great irritants such as graft & corruption, arrogance, long queues, long processing time, red tape in dealing with government officials. Moreover, it helps restore the citizens' trust/faith in the government.

With the help of this system citizens *really* know who they're doing business with and it has got the following merits:

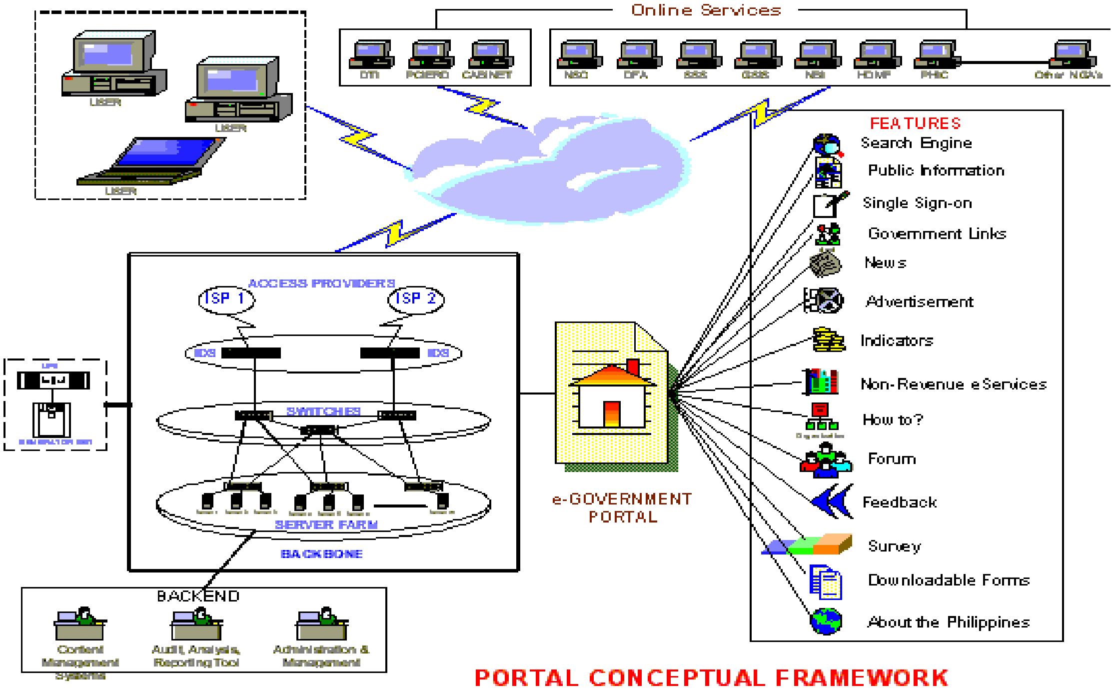
- Faster and better delivery of government information, programs and services;
- Transparency of operations (cuts red tape, helps eliminate graft & corruption);
- Helps make life easier for people who have to constantly interface with the government;
- A responsive, effective, service-oriented government; and
- Provides opportunity for citizens empowerment

Moreover, it provides an opportunity to empower citizens through community involvement, fighting graft/corruption and participation in other government programs, projects and activities. It also brings the government closer to its citizens by way of enabling citizens to interact electronically with the government

3.4.3 eSerbisyo Design

E- serbiyo is designed in such a way that it has provided Universal access point for connecting to the government through the Internet (to include other alternative methods of access, e.g. SMS). It is citizen-centric, business-friendly; and frontline service focused. In essence, it is one-stop source providing a convenient way for finding out and accessing government information and e-Services.

eSerbisyo Architecture



PORTAL CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

eSerbisyo has got features, namely Search Engine, Single Sign-On, Non-Revenue eServices, Step-by-step procedure for availing government services ,Public Information, Downloadable Forms, Forum, Survey, Indicators, News, About the Philippines, Feedback ,Advertisement, CMS , Audit, Analysis and Reporting Tools etc.

3.4.4 E-Payement Gateway (eBayad) under e-Serbsio

It is Internet-enabled application system designed to handle payment transactions involving government agencies. Under this system, citizens can do payments in the privacy of their homes, office or other remote areas, 24 hours a day 7 days a week using various payment modes (credit card, debit card, mobile banking, and SMS).Therefore, it can be termed as a comprehensive payment gateway for online services of the government. It allows citizens to pay for the services rendered by participating government agencies as it will be connected with all major bank consortia and telecommunications company. Moreover, it offers convenience for the general public to transact electronically and do business with the government rather than having to go to many agencies.

3.4.5 Payment through eBayad

It is very convenient to pay through this system as payment can be done at the comfort of ones' home, office and just about everywhere 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Besides, it helps save time and effort. With payments just a click and text away, one can have more time for other important things rather than spending them in endless counter lines and travel time. Most importantly, it minimizes opportunities for graft and corruption as lessening the need for face-to-face transactions. Besides, opportunities for graft and corruption can also be minimized.

3.5 Philippines Government Electronic Procurement System (PhilGEPS)

The PhilGEPS (Philippine Government Electronic Procurement System) is the single, centralized electronic portal that serves as the primary and definitive source of information on government procurement. The PhilGEPS was started since 2006.However; electronic procurement was started as early as 2000.

3.5.1 PhilGEPS Mandate

The relevant law mandates the use of PhilGEPS to be the primary and definitive source of information on government procurement. Procuring entities are required to post all procurement opportunities, bid results and other related information on the procurement of:

- Goods and general support services;
- Civil works ; and
- Consulting services

3.5.2 PhilGEPS Objectives

- Establish an open, transparent, efficient and competitive marketplace for government procurement ;
- Level the playing field among suppliers transacting with government;
- Build the framework to continuously improve the procurement processes;
- Provide most cost effective way by which government and suppliers interact with each other ; and
- Maintain a sustainable service that will integrate the procurement process .

3.5.3 Benefits from PhilGEPS to Government

- Improve transparency in government procurement;

- Increase competition resulting in more competitive pricing;
- Reduce procurement costs, including newspaper advertisement ;
- Provide audit trail (report on government bids and results) ; and
- Help implement government procurement policies.

3.5.4 Benefits from PhilGEPS to Suppliers

- provide suppliers easy access to government tenders ;
- Provide electronic documents for download ;
- Provide suppliers automatic notification of bid notices including bid supplements ;
- Savings on transportation costs and time ; and
- Provide a wealth of data for market research on government procurement.

3.5.5 PhilGEPS Features

Electronic Bulletin Board
It allows posting of procurement opportunities, notices of awards, electronic distribution of bid documents and automatic notification of bid notices and bid supplements.

Subscriber Registry
Registry of government agencies and all suppliers, contractors, manufacturers, distributors and consultants

Electronic Catalogue
A price list of common use goods, supplies, materials and equipment that can be purchased from a centralized procurement system is being implemented by the Procurement Service.

It is worth mentioning that the system has helped save a large amount of money which used to be spent on Newspaper Advertisements. Over the period of 2001 to 2007, it is estimated that around Php 424,375,084.00 is saved.

3.6 Initiatives to promote e-governance in the Philippines

In 2006, The Commission on Information and Communication Technology (CICT) drafted the Philippine ICT Strategic Roadmap 2006-2010 which outlined the Philippine Government's Strategic Programs and Initiatives for ICT. Strategic ICT programs is one of the components of such Roadmap which has emphasized on

Universal access to IT, Human capital development-Governance, Global ICT market competitiveness and Legal and policy agenda. *E-Government* Fund is another important part in this regard. For such fund 7 billion Philipino Pesho is allotted for 2003-2007 and from which 40 mission-critical projects are being implemented.

The government is trying its level best to expand Government online facility Which will include *e*-Services portal, Payment gateway, Stage 3 websites, Government Information Systems Plan, Updating of the plan, Information System Strategic Plan, The government also has got a plan to impart ICT training for government personnel in its effort to develop a corps of highly skilled ICT professionals in government. Besides, the efforts will also be there to improve Government Communication Network. In this regard, the government will make effort to develop an IP-based nationwide communications network that will connect all government agencies. Community *e*-Centers are another feature of government initiative. The centers act as access points for e- *g*overnment services.

4. E-Governance in Nepal

e-Governance is still not a popular concept in Nepal. Despite the fact that Nepal has been putting emphasis on science and technology since the very beginning of first five year plan in 1956, its achievement in that sector is not up to the expectation. The use of ICT for the purpose of e-governance is very limited and present status in this area clearly demands putting extra effort in its development for the overall development of Nepal.

The year of 1971 can be taken as an important year in terms of using ICT in Nepal. In that very year, the Nepalese Government used computers to process National Population Census data. National Computer Center (NCC) was established in 1974 with the objective of providing IT training within Nepal. The NCC developed software for various government agencies, processed examination results for SLC Board and Tribhuvan University. It also conducted regular training courses on Computer Literacy and software applications (http://www.enrd.org/egovernance.php).

Private sector began its activity in early eighties after the introduction of Personal Computers. In 1992 Mercantile Communication Pvt. Ltd. (MCPL) started commercial E-mail through Internet and in 1995 it was formally registered with HMG/N as first Internet Service Provider (ISP). Since 1999 Government liberalized its policy to use own VSAT. Since then the number of ISPs are increased and so the price of Internet service is decreasing in country. Now there are more then 15 ISPs and around 115,000 Internet users (NPC, 2002 cited in **http://www.enrd.org/egovernance.php**)..

It is to be noted that there are about forty software development companies and two hundred plus companies are involved in IT trading and more than five hundred training institutes are imparting training of different levels. Government and public sector has recently started academic IT courses in their respective Institutions (ibid). Computerization and IT applications implementation in the government is very low.

In 2000 government has declared Information Technology Policy, B.S. 2057 (2000) with the following objectives (ibid).

- To make information technology accessible to the general public and increase employment through this means;
- To build a knowledge-based society; and
- To establish knowledge-based industries.

In order to materialize the policy, National Information Technology Center (NITC) was established in 2002 and High Level Commission for Information Technology (HLCIT) was established in 2003. During the period of 2002-04 NITC developed multilingual national government portal (www.nepalgov.gov.np) containing 32 downloadable forms and searchable information of 10,000 government offices (Shakya S, 2007). HLCIT and NITC/MoEST with the technical assistance of Korean Information Technology Promotion Agency (KIPA) and KOICA has developed the e-Government Master Plan (ibid).

There is no difference in opinion that the government has sluggish motion in the path of e-governance, but some progress has definitely been observed. All central level offices have computers and network and most of district offices with electricity and telephone have at least one computer. However, it is unfortunate to know that most of the computer is being used only for typing purpose.

There are a few application software specific to following functional areas are currently in use and it can be considered as steps towards e-governance in the country:

- Financial Comptroller General Office (FCGO)
- Inland Revenue Department (IRD)
- Election Commission Elect
- Custom Offices

- Department of Health-HMIS
- Department of Land Information & Archives
- Immigration Office at Airport
- e-approval application at Ministry of General Administration
- General Post Office
- Company Registration
- Nepal Police

As mentioned earlier, most of the central offices have websites, but either they are not maintaining with up to date data or are not operating in a proper way.A few websites provide facility of application forms downloading. With a view to promoting e-procurement system, www.bolpatra.gov.np has been developed and handed over to government by IT Professional Forum (Shakya, 2007). The major breakthrough in this regard is Electronic Transaction and Digital Signature Act, 2063, which has already come into effect. Although 12 municipalities in Nepal are served by ISPs, most of the subscribers and users are concentrated in Kathmandu.

Nepal is, however, gradually progressing in this sector, but not to the level of expectation. The use of IT in governance is very low although awareness regarding the importance of IT is gradually increasing. Nevertheless, some successful initiatives are there, especially in Ministry of General Administration and General Post Office. The distinct problem felt, however, is lack of process ownership as majority of initiatives are focused on internal optimization and very little has been achieved in terms of comprehensive reform. More over, some efforts are not successful because the reform was focused on technology part only without giving due consideration to change management (ibid).

The major challenge of e-governance in Nepal is the lack of demand from the citizens for the use of computer system in the service delivery. In addition, civil service in Nepal is still traditional. The rules and regulations, formulated almost four decades back, are under enforcement, which hardly gives any space to computerize system. Many regulations and workflow are of traditional in nature obstructing the introduction of IT. Moreover, lack of institutional memory is another bottleneck of ICT growth in the country. Applications are developed in an individual initiation basis and organization rarely feels ownership of the product. Most importantly, it is treated as a separate department rather than an integrated part of bureaucracy.

Generally IT department is made responsible for entering data, processing and reporting. IT does not seem to be part of process workflow (ibid). Besides, inadequate human resource, lack of necessary legal framework, little public awareness about ICT, and poor ICT infrastructure across the nation etc. are the factors, which are hindering to introduce and implement e-governance successfully in the country. Moreover, due to lack of integrated planning, ICT related resources in the government offices are not fully utilized. Most of the government officials have a mindset of losing their jobs in case of successful implementation of ICT in the government agencies and hence they are resistant to the proposed changes (Shakya et al cited in **http://www.nepalnews.com.np/contents/2007/englishweekly/spotlight/apr/apr13/article.php**).

5. Lessons from the Philippines

The Philippine experience is very valuable and useful for Nepal which is striving hard to materialize e-governance in the country. Following points depict as to how the top most priority of the Philippines on ICT in general and e-governance in particular serve the developmental interest of Nepal as well.

- e-Governance Vision of the Philippines is to achieve a smart and ICT-competent Government providing innovative and efficient on-line services that respond to the needs of citizens and institutions worldwide. According to the 2008 UN e-Government Readiness Survey Ranking, out of 192 countries, the Philippines fall on 66th position. In terms of Web Measure Index, it is at par with the best in the world. According to the 2005 UN e-Government Readiness Survey, the Philippines is in 17th position out of 179 countries in terms of Web-Measure Index. This is possible in the Philippines only because of commitment of the top leaders for the development of the ICT and e-governance. In this context, Nepal needs competent leaders who can understand the importance of e-governance and devote themselves on the development of ICT oriented good governance in the country.
- Around 98.6% Local Government Units of the Philippines are furnished with web site and 92.5% National Government agencies are equipped with website facilities. Moreover, the quantum jump of the Philippines in terms of its advancement in the IT sector can be felt by knowing the fact that 142 agencies are connected with online services and 10 agencies do have on line payment services. However, in case of Nepal only 12 municipalities are served by ISPs. Therefore, the picture of Nepal in this regard is dismal though it is progressing gradually. Since local government units are the ones which provide basic services to the people, the Nepalese government has to invest massively to provide services to the needy people efficiently and effectively through computerized system.

- Online services in the areas namely-Census (National Statistics Office), *e*-Procurement, Business Name Registration and Income Tax Filing are already made available by the government in the Philippines. Despite the fact, some initiations and limited works have been done in Nepal in these areas, the pace is very slow. The lesson for Nepal in this regard is government has to vehemently and aggressively concentrate to expedite the application of ICT in different fronts of the government with which the people have to come into contact for their day to day businesses.

- Mobile governance is also in practice in the Philippines. It covers delivery of public services through mobile technology. In this regard, 49 agencies have some forms of SMS-backed services. However, Nepal is quite far behind having limited facilities of e-banking and SMS banking by a limited number of banks but only in urban areas. Therefore, Nepal has to expand the scope of mobile governance.

- Electronic governance in Local Government Units (eLGU) Program is one of the popular programs in the Philippines. Its objective is to enable LGUs to make a head start in adopting computerization by empowering them to embrace the technology and apply the benefits of ICT to local governance towards an improved quality of public service. Such kind of e-governance in Nepal has not been visualised and has not came into practice so far. However, Bharatpur Municipality office is the first one to initiate effort in this direction. In this context, the Nepalese government has to work hard to include more and more local government units to expand the scope of the e- governance.

- e-Serbisyo is another program in the Philippines which makes people in a convenient position to be in touch with the government. It is citizen –centric/customer –focused program which is designed under the basic concept of the needs of common citizens. It brings about a responsive and effective government by streamlining business processes and reducing red tape by avoiding the great irritants such as graft & corruption, arrogance, long queues, and long processing time. Moreover, it helps restore the citizens' trust/faith upon the government. It provides an opportunity to empower citizens through community involvement. The Nepalese government has to urgently start program like e-Serbisyo, which helps in bridging the gap between the common people and the government.

- The PhilGEPS (Philippine Government Electronic Procurement System) is another e-governance related activity of the government of the Philippines. It is the single, centralized electronic portal that serves as the primary and definitive source of information on government procurement. The objective of this facility is to establish an open, transparent, efficient and competitive marketplace for government procurement; to level the playing field among suppliers transacting with government; to build the framework to continuously improve the procurement processes; to provide most cost effective way by which government and suppliers interact with each other; and to maintain a sustainable service that will integrate the procurement process. In the area of e-procurement in Nepal, the work of IT Professional Forum is well regarded as it has developed the portal **www.bolptra.gov.np** and handed over to the government. The Nepalese government has to take immediate steps to move towards e-procurement though in limited scale in the initial phase.

- The most important aspect of the Philippine bureaucracy is its topmost importance on the improvement of the public service delivery. It is quite interesting to know that people are always at the centre of the country's reform initiatives with particular reference to service delivery. In this regard, the government has highly emphasized on enhancing rewards and sanctions, public service delivery audit and strengthening of "“Mamamayan Muna, Hindi Mamaya Na” Program. The **MAMAMAYAN MUNA, HINDI MAMA NA** Program is the best practice of the Philippines, which is worth replicating in case of Nepal. It is a client-satisfaction program launched nationwide to instill courteous and efficient behavior among public servants. The program demands the need for behavioral reforms in the bureaucracy, particularly in the manner by which civil servants deal with the public. **Mamamayan Muna Call Center** is one of the features of the Program under which the Center is equipped with an answering machine which can receive or accommodate calls or messages from the reporting public for the rest of the day or even after office hours. The program like this can contribute the Ministry of General Administration to implement its on-going project called "Expediting Governance Reform through Strategic Communication". It is because the **MAMAMAYAN MUNA, HINDI MAMA NA** type **program** can contribute to create a critical mass at grass root level that has pivotal role to implement reform initiatives. Most importantly, such program compels bureaucrats to change their attitudes and make them clients friendly.

- On line governance is an important feature of the Civil Service Commission (CSC) of the Philippines. Under such governance, the CSC has been practicing Computer-Assisted Testing (CAT), on-line job search facility called the job opportunity bank system, Databank of Individuals Barred (DIBAR) , The CSC personal information data based system. Because of use of web and computer the CSC is in a position to perform its responsibilities with acumen and efficiency. Nepal can draw lesson from this and take initiatives to strengthen capacity of the Public Service Commission of Nepal by using more and more ICT to the extent possible.

6. Conclusion:

There is no doubt that the prosperity and development of the Philippines is based on its advancement on Information and Communication Technology. Information and communication technologies in the country have been used utmost to provide the best possible services to the people. Nepal can instill message from the Philippines that if the dream of **New Nepal** is to be materialized, sooner or later Nepal has to accord the top most priority to the ICT to ensure e-governance in the country. In this regard, e-readiness for e-governance is urgently required. e-readiness has to do with development of system in package form including preparation of data system infrastructure, legal infrastructure, institutional infrastructure, human infrastructure, legal infrastructure, technological infrastructure and commitment of the leaders and their e-centric thinking and advocacy.

To sum up, the key word in e-government is "government" but not "electronic". That's why e-government is still government, not electronics. Most importantly, implementation of e-governance is not a technical issue; instead it is a management issue (Shakya, 2007).

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