GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR SUCCESSFUL E-GOVERNMENT

Compelling reasons for the government to go on line

1. **Priority development needs that require government involvement.** E-government applications should best be embedded in areas that are perceived as closely related to priority development needs of the society. This brings broad support, makes it easier to overcome inherent difficulties and sustain attention, commitment and funding.

2. **Efficiency and effectiveness as key success criteria of government involvement.** It is best if the role that the government’s plays in such areas is judged partly or predominantly by factors that ICT can bring. The link between ICT applications, optimization of government operations and achievement of important social development goals is a very convincing argument for the development of e-government.

Ability of the government to go on line

3. **Availability of (initial) funding.** Even initial pilot e-government operations should start with good understanding of costs involved and assured funding that follows careful analysis of opportunity cost. Whenever advisable and feasible, funding should be treated as a business investment and carry expectation of returns.

4. **Skills and culture of the civil service.** Civil servants must be able (ICT, change and project management, partnership-building skills) and willing to support e-government or as a minimum must be eager to learn and change. The culture prevailing in the civil service determines the assessment of expected loss that e-government application can bring to individual civil servants and *eo ipso* the eventual strength and effectiveness of the anti-change lobby (if any).

5. **Co-ordination.** Needed “backroom” co-ordination – within and between agencies - and effort must be ironed out before any e-government application goes on line to avoid duplication, assure interoperability and to meet the expectation of users.

6. **Legal framework.** What is not legal, in many circumstances, does not exist and therefore producing it is a waste. E-government introduces unique legal requirements and these should be faced early on.
7. **ICT infrastructure.** Infrastructure needs should be assessed against the background of requirements and desired results of planned e-government development. Anything short of it limits both. Anything above it carries the danger of converting itself into expensive and idle office equipment.

8. **Political leadership and long-term political commitment.** The chief executive officer of the public sector must be committed, must lead, build broad support and be eager to learn. This generates the all-important positive signals that the civil service receives from their top leadership and from the public at large.

9. **Public engagement.** The public should have a personal stake in e-government development. This should be reinforced by actively, genuinely and continuously soliciting the public to participate in development of e-government applications so that they are custom crafted to the way people live and work.

10. **Plans for development of human capital and technical infrastructure.** There should be a vision and plans for closing the existing divides in skills and access. Otherwise, both the public administration and the society cannot hope to become ICT literate and capable – an important ingredient for e-government success.

11. **Partnerships.** Early on, the government should see business and civil society as its partners in securing financial resources, skills improvement, access improvement, adequate capacity to service the ICT network. Partnerships should never be forged at the cost of transparency, accountability or economic soundness of investments.

12. **Monitoring and evaluation.** Setting clear responsibilities and realistic benchmarks for e-government development as well as and their transparent monitoring is an important ingredient of eventual success and builds up the overall transparency and accountability framework in the public sector.

**Compelling reasons for the users of e-government to go and stay on line**

13. **Perception of added value.** Any design of e-government development must incorporate calculation of added value that the application intends to bring to individual users. It is best if this calculation proves to be congruent with that of the users.

14. **Access and skills.** It should be made easy in terms of time, cost and effort for the potential beneficiaries of e-government to actually use it. Imaginative solutions for increasing the level of this “easiness” that include but also transcend individual access and individual skills must be part of any e-government development plans.

15. **Privacy and security.** Security and privacy concerns – culturally defined as they are - must be addressed early on, openly and with demonstrated professional aptitude.
The public is bound to expect a breakdown in this area and any news (even informal) of such a breakdown is bound to become a huge setback with long-lasting consequences.