Electronic/Mobile Government in Africa: Progress Made and Challenges Ahead

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E-Governance

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Functions of the Department of Immigration

- The Zambia’s Department of Immigration is a Public Institution which falls under the Ministry of Home Affairs.
- The Department presides over all immigration matters in the country;
  - regulating and facilitating the movements of persons entering and leaving the country through the provision of effective border management control services,
  - monitoring the stay and activities of immigrants in the country by issuing various types of visas and immigration permits to deserving applicants in order to contribute effectively to the country’s social and economic development.
Advances made in Information Communication Technologies (ICTs) in the last two decades or so have given people easy access to mass communication tools. This has turned the world into a global village as information on areas hitherto unknown has become more readily available. Furthermore, Zambia’s policies of encouraging foreign investment, international trade and tourism and people’s desire to seek greener pastures have all contributed to mass movements of people into and from Zambia.
Immigration Reforms

• The business community in Zambia identified the Department of Immigration as one of the institutions that contributed considerably to delays in setting up business enterprises in the country.
• It therefore became important to design proactive strategies to fulfill government policies on one hand and meet the demands and expectations of the traveling public on the other.
• The Department has since the year 2006 been undergoing Institutional Assessment and Process Re-engineering in order to streamline and expedite the approval processes for applications for various Permits and Visas and enhance accountability.
E-Governance-Business Process Re-engineering

- ICT staff together with the Department of Immigration Staff undertook a serious study, mapping and documenting of the existing business processes for visa, permit approval procedures and border management.
- The process also involved identifying work processes that could be done away with and/or maintained and where necessary introducing new ones. The new workflows were then computerized using a newly developed computer based application known as the Zambia Immigration Management System (ZIMS).
- The aim of the re-engineering process was to improve immigration service delivery; reduce the time it takes for the Department to issue Permits and Visas and Clearing of persons at the ports of entry by about 50% ultimately reducing the cost of doing business for the applicants in the country.
• **ZIMS** is an electronic integrated visa and permit approval system. The system also has a component of border management within itself.

• **Permit and Visa Processing**
  The processing of applications for permits and visas is done through ZIMS. Data is entered for each particular case and decisions made accordingly through the established channels. Results of the applications are then made available on the system. This saves on time to transmit information on physical files.

• **Border Management Processing**
  The electronic system enables the Department to clear the traveling public at two land borders and one International Airport. The system also enables the department to keep track of migration at the controls mentioned and information transmitted electronically to the Headquarters.
A modern Customer Service Center (CSC) has been created at the Immigration Headquarters. The purpose of the centre is to provide a conducive business environment in which to handle clients. The CSC also provides a transparent business environment to deal with clients as it has created a one stop facility for all permit and visa applications and eliminated one-on-one transactions by making use of ZIMS which is an electronic based work process system.
Key Challenges

The project has not been without its challenges. Some of the major ones include:-

• Bringing all staff on board in the re-engineering process so that there is staff ownership of the new work processes. (Mind set Change)
• Create an interface between the Zambia Immigration Website and ZIMS to enable clients to file in applications and monitor progress electronically.
• Inadequate physical infra-structure at various Immigration Offices and Border Controls in the country to enable the speedy processing of applications and the efficient handling of travelers (Citizens, tourists and other visitors) at all Borders [entry/ exit points];
• Building staff confidence in the new business processes particularly when dealing with ZIMS, as it is an I.T. based system.
• The continued necessity for institutional capacity building in ICTs particularly as the Departments rolls out the ZIMS system countrywide
Conclusion

• Effective border management, permit and visa approval systems are very cardinal areas of operations for the Department of Immigration. Efficient service delivery enables the Department contribute positively to investment, trade and tourism in the country.

• The paradigm shift from manual to an electronic based operating system is giving the Department an impetus to offer a more effective immigration service delivery.
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