Foreword

Electronic Government, or E-Government, involves using Information Technology (IT), specifically the Internet, to deliver government information and services to four main stakeholders: citizens, the business community, government employees, and government agencies. Four types of e-government systems can be distinguished as Government-to-Citizen (G2C), Government to Business (G2B), Government to Employee (G2E), and Government to Government (G2G). A fully integrated e-government also provides ways for its citizens to participate in the affairs of the government—the process often termed as e-participation or e-inclusion.

Electronic government has shown encouraging results in developed countries in the context of delivering electronic information and services to all the stakeholders involved. In developing countries, it is a promising technological innovation to improve government performance and efficiency. Potential benefits of e-government in developing countries include increased transparency, reduced corruption, greater convenience, efficiency, revenue growth, and cost reduction. E-government initiatives in developing countries provide resources and tools that serve individuals and communities by delivering access and empowerment in areas such as local economic development, cultural affairs, civic activism, education, community-based health, and environmental initiatives.

However, despite the many potential benefits that e-government initiatives promise, developing nations are still faced with various issues regarding the full implementation of e-government services and their use by the citizens. Some challenges of e-government systems include providing satisfactory access to the e-services and the pre-requisite technologies, ensuring privacy and security, dealing with the changing technologies, and quantifying the customer satisfaction of the government’s provision. Most e-government projects often fail because of their complexity and the inherent political process. People living as disadvantaged communities in developing countries still live under low socio-economic conditions with poor per-capita income, education, infrastructure, and access to telecommunication services. Rural communities are usually the last to get any kind of government developmental benefits due to the infrastructural challenges. Due to long distances and lack of knowledge about the government programs, people in rural communities tend to fall behind in accessing government services. This suggests that numerous problems exist that need to be addressed by the key stakeholders and other interested parties, whether from an academic or a public service viewpoint.

When I was asked to write a foreword for this book, I did not hesitate. Given the problems experienced with the implementation and adoption of e-government systems in developing countries, this book is not only a timely addition to the existing body of knowledge, but also a referenced text on the topic. Information presented in the chapters is current, and all chapters were subjected to a strict review process to ensure quality and high information content. The chapters report on the current developments
in a large number of developing countries. Apart from discussions on the current issues with respect to e-government implementation and practice, it also provides workable solutions and sound recommendations. Other related topics such as m-government, e-governance, e-participation, e-inclusion, and use of newer technologies such as mobile phones and social networking are also discussed. This can usefully guide and inform not only the researchers in the field but also the government officials, decision makers in government departments, as well as the political leaders. In this respect, the current text, E-Government Implementation and Practice in Developing Countries, makes an important contribution to address the current situations and issues regarding the implementation and adoption of e-government in developing nations.

This text is organised in four sections. In the first section, scholars from Iraq, Kyrgyzstan, Venezuela, and Malaysia share their experiences regarding initiatives to enable e-participation and social inclusion. This is followed by a section on the use of technologies (such as Web 2.0 collaboration technologies, smart phones, and social media) in Egypt, Mexico, and Brazil to further benefit C2G interactions. The next section addresses the acceptance and diffusion of m-government services in Egypt, Malawi, and Jordan. The last section provides us with rich case studies on the issues and users’ perspectives regarding e-government services in countries like Serbia, Saudi Arabia, Iran, Romania, and Thailand.

I am convinced that E-Government Implementation and Practice in Developing Countries will amply add to our current knowledge with respect to the development, deployment, use, acceptance, and diffusion of e-government systems in developing countries.

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