Chapter 10

ICT Strategy Development: From Design to Implementation - Case of Egypt

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ABSTRACT

Information and communication technology (ICT) is continuously setting the pace for a changing, competitive and dynamic global marketplace and representing an enabling platform for business and socioeconomic development. The impact of ICT adoption, diffusion and adoption can go well beyond being a state-of-the-art infrastructure; it can have concrete impact on development. ICT strategy development from start to finish, from design to implementation should cater to the different needs of the community whether it is societal, economic, business and political with an aim to realize universal access to optimize the impact in terms of scalability and sustainability. Building the ICT infrastructure and infostructure will not realize quantum leaps in the development process unless it is coupled with concrete projects and initiatives that engage the society at large with its multiple stakeholders from public, private, government and civil society organizations irrespective of their locations whether urban or remote, gender or background. This chapter describes the evolution of the ICT sector in Egypt with an emphasis on national ICT strategy development across its different design and implementation phases as an integral element of Egypt’s overall development process within the context of an emerging economy.

INTRODUCTION

Developing nations when addressing their future development plans, they need to develop a formula that integrates the changes and developments that are taking place globally and adapt a methodology that addresses their local changing needs while optimally allocating their limited resources to serve their business and socioeconomic development requirements. For policymakers, promoting information and

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-5225-1680-4.ch010
communication technology (ICT) for development has taken center stage due to its impact on development and on democracy across different sectors with implications on governance, better management and transparency (Frasheri, 2002).

Within the context of ICT deployment in developing nations, it is worth noting that in the 1960s and 1970s the focus was more directed to the role played by the state and the public sector. This was followed in the 1980s and 1990s by diverting the attention to the role played by the private sector and ICT multinationals. In the early years of the 21st century, the attention was shifted to the role of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and their vital involvement in diffusing ICT among different communities at urban and rural levels and especially underprivileged groups. Most recently, it is the small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and startups who are taking center stage with the notion of entrepreneurship and innovation. Moreover, the role of the civil society was coupled with the growing attention being directed to corporate social responsibility (CSR) and the role of the community at large to integrate socially with the underprivileged segments in the community. The shifting role of ICT and the corresponding strategies have been consistently adapting to the dynamic changes taking place in global markets both developing and developed.

Developing nations should focus on various socioeconomic needs of the society and to the benefits that could be realized from the amalgamation of the experiences and resources of the state (government), private sector, public sector and the civil society through models of partnership and collaboration such as public-private partnership (PPP). In many cases, the national ICT strategy intends to deploy a multi-stakeholders’ approach to improve social inequality, economic development and the quality of life of the citizens. The objective is usually to contribute to the long-term national development plans by capitalizing on the opportunities enabled through ICT. These developments are changing, iterative and regularly adapting to market needs. Alternatively, in developing strategies, nations look at competition, investment, innovation and ICT as part of an overall integrated solution that needs to be formulated for ICT to have an effective impact on business and socioeconomic development and growth (Kamel, 2009). In Egypt, the primary objective of ICT adoption, diffusion and adaptation is to support national development plans while engaging all stakeholders including the government, the private sector and the civil society. ICT is perceived as an enabler for socioeconomic development and a tool that can transform the society. The universal reach across different levels in the community is believed to be a key factor in realizing nationwide societal development.

ICT innovations are increasingly having important implications on business and socioeconomic development due to its role in introducing and diffusing the concepts of knowledge sharing, community development and equality. However, it is important to note that having an ICT infrastructure alone is not enough to solve all developmental problems; ICT should be looked at as a catalyst, a platform for development that needs the environmental and logistical setting to help the developmental process (Harris 1998; Kransberg 1991). The implications of ICT for development could be felt at the individual, organizational and societal levels. ICT advances have always changed the way human interact, learn, communicate, compete and strategize. While the basic needs of humankind have long been food, clothing and shelter, the time has come to add information to such invaluable list. Universal information access is becoming a primary need for everyone. Information and its technology platform is becoming an integral part of day-to-day lives around the world with implications on individuals, organizations and societies. This is manifested in the growing evolution of the information society, knowledge sharing, big data analytics and more.
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