

Digital and Interactive Content Production as Part of Lesotho Strategic Development – A Brief Study On Lesotho Working Towards National Collaboration For Updated Civil Register and Voter Register in the Spirit of Improved Service Delivery

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ABSTRACT

Some say that the world is getting smaller, but I believe with those who say it is not. It just feels smaller, because modern technology helps overcome the distances. To be part of the modern world, with its advantages and obligations an identity is required. For the government to provide schooling, health services, and local government delivery services and to know who should be eligible to vote, it needs to know who you are. It also needs to know who are to pay taxes, do public service delivery and contribute to society in other ways. This is why many countries want to keep track of their residents; to know when they are born, when they marry or divorce and when they die. Decision-makers depend on sound and timely statistics for policy development, decision making and for programme monitoring and evaluation. In the present scenario, Information communication technology has added the impetus to the services provided by the Lesotho Government (GOL) since the implementation of Lesotho Government Data Network (LGDN). This paper will highlights the role of digital technology and interactive content for strategic development of Lesotho and the potential of Lesotho Government working towards national collaboration specifically for update civil register, census data and voter register..

Keywords, Service, Civil, Voter, Data, Register & ICT

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1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

[1]Following the successful conclusion of the 2012 elections, Lesotho Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) envisaged to continue to support the sustainability of know-how and the development of long-term capacities of the (IEC), including the latest voter registration technologies getting adopted [4]. To this end, the Programme can Assistance and improve, the current ongoing Lesotho Civil Registration to harmonize its national civil registry with IEC's voter database, as well as other agency databases, so that Government Funded institution can work together and collaborate as necessary. Developing a strategic plan which will demonstrates a clear need and the official exchange of information will improve information dissemination to electorates. A clear definition as to who is entitled to vote, as voting depends also on the age, comprehensive legal requirements and constituency depends on residence, so the details of voter registration can change but the citizenship changes vest on the responsibilities of Home Affairs Ministry. And the 'Right to Vote' is decided by the Lesotho IEC, not the Home Affairs Ministry.[3].

Central to the debate is that there is overwhelming evidence that Lesotho people want all Government information to be centralized to this extent. A common National Identity implies that all records are tied to that ID, which gives the government agencies great power as well as convenience and flexibility. Overall, a combined ID Card and Voter Registration has many advantages, as it allows the development of a permanent rolling voter register and takes the pressure off the IEC when elections are called. Lesotho has the skills, and most of good technology infrastructure, to do this, so the only problems are people culture in Government authorities, political commitment and cost to deliver this project. The project might run within a period of 8-12 months under professional private and technical advisers. There will be a need to develop a plan for the integration of civic and voter registration in Lesotho, and to determine the costs and benefits. Implementation and support for the programme may take longer time. The plan will cover capacity building for Lesotho IEC information technology department and Home Affairs Civil & National ID department [3].

In 2012 Analysys Mason conducted a high-level review of Lesotho's ICT operations across all government ministries and at the Lesotho IEC. The findings were based on the detailed technical views and an operational self-assessment (ITIL standard view) for each ministry or department. Analysis Mason completed more than 25 ministry and departmental interviews with senior business, ICT managers and ICT operators. In addition, the country's ICT operations were compared to industry standard, Lesotho IEC was included in the study. The current ICT infrastructure at the Lesotho IEC, Ministry of Home Affairs and Department of Bureau of Statistics in terms of communications network, database applications, business suits, servers, PCs, and field registration equipment was found to be generally fit to perform its mandate of each agencies, It was found to be more than capable of supporting a full range of electoral support services and citizens service delivery. Most of the ministries and public agencies like the IEC Lesotho work in a silo; there is no vision for information exchange and how that can increase efficiency in different departments [3].

There is the perception that all the information that they collect belongs to that particular AGENCY and there is no need for them to share it elsewhere. Example a particular ministry needs the information they will purchase or build an application that will provide them with the information. GIS is an example of such a system whereby , Local Government, IEC, Public Works, traffic, Health, and Bureau of Statistics to name a few are the ministries that can benefit through digital collaboration rather developing their own GIS. Finally it is clear from the list of Slow ICT advancement results that duplication of efforts has been captured in many advisory reports. The general conclusions drawn from this review suggest that Lesotho is a country that is in need of leadership and direction in the implementation of ICT across all aspects of government and public funded institutes [3].

There is a tremendous amount of duplication of information and effort across the government. This has resulted in double, triple and quadruple spending on the same services in addition to a lot of manual processes to obtain inter-governmental information. Examples of this include the four GISs that are separately maintained by Statistics, Natural Resources, IEC and LRA. There is also no information sharing between Passports, Vehicle Registration, police, Court Systems, IEC etc. In order for the police to get any vehicle registration information, they have to physically go to the traffic systems to look at the vehicle registration information – a very time consuming and expensive process that could be done by inter-system information sharing[3].

2. OBJECTIVE

The purpose of this paper is to outline the approach to be taken towards the digital and interactive content production as part of Lesotho strategic development. This is going to contribute to modernisation of civil register, census and voter register. It will help the government budget to be controlled and effectively make use of tax payers money for long term benefits.

3. METHODOLOGY

To undertake this study, it was necessary to gather a range of information on the existing use of ICT across government in Lesotho Government and Lesotho Independent Electoral Commission. This was not intended to be an in-depth study, but sufficient to gain an understanding of how effectively ICT is used across the main ministries. To measure the effectiveness of ICT usage, we considered the mainstream components of a modern ICT deployment, including email systems, Online databases, information system (IS) applications used to support day-to-day operations, integration of data interchange with other ministries etc [3]. This information was collected from various representatives of the departments using desk top review approach. Recent ICT reports from consultancy submission, recommended strategic policies have also been used to support study arguments and future recommendation.

3.1 Historical Background Of Data Collection Of Civil Register, Voter Register And Census Data

3.1.1 Lesotho Independent Electoral Commission

The IEC was established in 1997 as a body responsible for the management of elections. It is made up of a three-person Commission and the Directorate. The Commission consists of the chairperson and two commissioners. This structure is mainly responsible for policy-making and oversight. Each commissioner is appointed by the King to serve a maximum of two three-year terms. In appointing the IEC, the King is advised by the State Council and selects the prospective commissioners from a list of no fewer than five names that are jointly nominated by all registered political parties. The commission is empowered to organize the credible, fair and impartial National Assembly and local government elections as well as referenda in line with the Electoral Act and the Constitution of Lesotho. The Commission's main responsibilities are:

- ❖ registering electors
- ❖ supervision of the preparation, publication and maintenance of a
- ❖ general register of electors
- ❖ registering political parties
- ❖ demarcating constituency boundaries
- ❖ conducting elections

Voter registration in Lesotho is mandatory and a continuous process. The National Assembly Electoral Act, 2011, gives the IEC powers to suspend the registration of voters during the elections only. The National Assembly Electoral Act 2011 provides that the IEC through the office of the Director of Elections shall prepare and display the list of registered voters 30 days in advance of the voting day. The public display of the voters' roll is done in two phases, namely the provisional list and the final list. IEC Network infrastructure covers a wide area and exploits number of different technologies. The branches are connected to IEC headquarters data centre through WAN technologies. It is estimated that IEC had about 150 users on its network spread throughout the remote locations. It is important to note that majority of users are based in Maseru district. There are available ICT service which includes, biometric technology to support voter register GIS, internet connection and email facilities. The final product of a voter register is voters roll in the form of a report based on SQL server and other modern platforms. Voter details are collected directly from the constituency villages to the district then to IEC data centre.

4. MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS LESOTHO

[5] The Ministry of Home Affairs in Lesotho is entrusted in enhancing socio - economic development by providing high quality services in the protection of human life and property, and controlling free movement of people, into, within and out of Lesotho. This will render Lesotho stable, prosperous, and peace with itself and its neighbors as enshrined in the vision 2020. The Ministry desire to offer a multitude of services to the citizens of Lesotho, as well as foreigners, who wish to visit, work or stay in Lesotho. The Ministry's core functions are: Maintaining the National Population Register (NPR).

Civil Services which includes,

- ❖ Managing the birth, marriage and death records,
- ❖ Determining and granting citizenship,
- ❖ Issuing travel documents and passports,
- ❖ Issuing identity documents (ID).

Immigration service's includes

- ❖ Administering admissions into the country
- ❖ Determining the residency status of foreigners and issuing permits thereof Custodianship of refugee affairs
- ❖ Inspectorate
- ❖ Policy directive

5. MAJOR PROBLEMS

[4] Some notable achievements for the Government of Lesotho include the implementation of a Lesotho Government Data Network (LGDN) with live operation commencing from 1 April 2009. There are a number of legacy systems that need to continue to be supported which include payroll, procurement, and ID and passport production. However the following problems need serious attentions:

- ❖ Management are not receiving high quality management information upon which they can base informed decisions. There is a need for robust Corporate Governance and Information Governance to ensure the necessary compliance to procedures.
- ❖ There is no official technical collaboration between Home Affairs and NGOs/citizens supporting democracy institutes such as Lesotho IEC and other.
- ❖ There is no official technical collaboration between government and business/citizens strengthening service delivery.
- ❖ There is no official collaboration within and between NGOs – platform for joint action.
- ❖ Tax payer's money doubled for government or Public institute's suppliers for single service which can be shared like Internet Service provider, data sharing practices and Telecommunication services etc...
- ❖ Service delivery from points of Government agencies and public institutes scared which makes impossible for clients to receive services while same time, same place, same service point such services are paid out of tax collection.
- ❖ Duplication of systems such as GIS, financial payment systems, Energy systems, data capturing for Electorates VS Civil register and Government printing services.
- ❖ High volume of paper use is still visible as the exchange of information and correspondence is still based in circular, saving-grams, File rotation and Government Memos.

6. OPTIONS

The goals behind collaboration and social media tools are clearly beneficial to business better information sharing, more efficient decision-making, and enhanced business relationships, among others. And trends are clearly indicating that collaboration will become a fundamental way of conducting many types of business activities in the near future. It is important to note that Online collaboration tools and external social sharing tools in particular present security risks to the operation of enterprise networks and computing systems, as well as to the confidentiality of intellectual property and business information must be managed by competent ICT experts.

- Create a business plan for collaboration and social networking solutions, starting with the business need
- Create policies on information confidentiality and expectations for each agency/ employee activity when interacting on collaboration sites. There should be a clear policies and guidelines with regards to ICT networking enterprises which will regulate the technical collaboration of each department of agency.
- Define policies on network security measures such as remote access by mobile devices, level of password protection, and use of direct file sharing.
- Create training resources for all users, user training with on collaboration topics such as recognizing social engineering tactics and appropriately tagging content to prevent inappropriate sharing.
- Craft clear security governance mechanisms for collaboration, Security Measures in Collaboration and Networking Technology, the best strategy for reducing and mitigating the threats that can come from online collaboration and sharing is to follow defense-in-depth security practices. These practices control access to sensitive systems and websites, then define what users can see and do when they are granted access.
- Identify regulatory and compliance requirements that might restrict use of or information disclosure on social media.

7. CONCLUSION

The study had highlighted the use of modern technologies which has significantly changed the dynamics and the methods involved in capturing and reporting both civil data and voter records. It is in this spirit that aims to assist authorities to develop, publish and produce national records for citizen's consumption on regularly or on a timely basis, to improve their capacity to deliver better services. To achieve these objectives, the Lesotho Independent Electoral Commission and Ministry of Home Affairs must develop and presents the policy issues, management considerations, and technical options involved in the primary phases of the process in order to established permanent and official collaboration in order to keep both Voter Register and National Population Register (NPR) together to keep it dynamically and get it updated.

The on-going continues voter registration and civil registration project can further be support through official collaboration on other national agencies including the Ministry of Health, Local Government, Bureau of Statistics Lesotho, Law enforcement agencies, and financial services to become even more effective. The final findings from the paper believes that there will be no longer a need to spend millions of Maloti or dollars or every five years to undertake Voter registration and multiples reinvention of technology use in Government agencies for more similar projects which can be done jointly not in silos as it is the current practise [2].

With current 2012-2013 civil registration initiative, all government agencies including Lesotho National Electoral Commission will have to extract the list of voters, conduct election, modify to suit elections phase, give the public an opportunity to challenge it and then conduct any future election. Lesotho citizens will also benefit immensely from this suggestion noting that citizens will no longer be required to do multiple registrations with various government agencies for services delivery[8].



8. RECOMMENDATION AND WAYFORWARD

The information and communication technologies have continued to provide positive support at Lesotho IEC and Ministry of Home Affairs have continued to spend additional tax payer's money whiling using the Government budget for more similar services, but working in silos by evolving technical expertise to improve their capacity building while the global marketplace has made some of this practices to be less costly.[7] They have reached a point where it is reasonable to conclude that, with the necessary political will and a limited investment, most legislatures can now have access to the technical means for capturing and reporting their institutional operations on a timely basis. [2]In addition African countries a have systems of collaborating together such as South Africa and Sierra leone to mention few, The same arrangement can be in place to enhance their existing operations by adopting best practices, techniques and innovations developed by others[6].The review of methods presented in this document shows that are variety of options for Lesotho as country to consider. It is believed that the proposed method of working can attract international donor funding assistance which can put Lesotho capability on the global map for practice of good governance. The paper This identifies strategic recommendations, discussed below, that are organized around the themes of policies, management considerations, and technical options[7].

Policies

Establish written policies, consistent with the goals and values of both Lesotho Independent Electoral Commission and Ministry of Home Affairs, which are needed to guide the process of capturing and reporting proceedings [7].

Management Considerations

[7] Establish a coordinating technical committee in which all the organizational units responsible for producing and publishing the various versions of the record of civil register and voter register are represented at the working level. Establish a committee to ensure procedures are developed and implemented to preserve records of Lesotho IEC and Ministry of Home Affairs.

Technical Options

- ❖ Utilize any on shelf workflow available from Enterprise edition for large network operations, content and/or document management systems to support all phases of the capturing and reporting process.
- ❖ Develop systems that can support multiple publication formats – print and online from any recognizable database platform such Oracle, SQL and MS access with resources permit – within short deadlines.
- ❖ Collaborate and more development of a technical infrastructure that provides the hardware, software, networks, communication systems and users' support needed for all phases of the capturing and reporting process. Use open document and data standards, such as XML, for all reports whenever possible to improve document exchange and to support preservation and permanent access.

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John Maphephe is a PhD research student at Durban university of Technology in South Africa. He specializes in Information and Communication Technologies). John has been working in ICT for over a decade on both electoral and non-election specific projects, specializing in ICT project management, voter registration and auditing of ICT systems for government agencies and others. John has in-depth knowledge and broad comparative experience of ICT use in civil/voter registration projects, ballot paper printing systems, results tabulations systems and nominated candidates' databases. A citizen of Lesotho, he has run his own ICT business and Construction since 1998. He began working with the Lesotho Independent Election Commission in 1999 and was swiftly promoted to IT Systems and Service Manager – a position he held from 2002-2008. He has obtained two Master degrees in Business Administration and Good governance and Political transformation, also a Certified Accpac ERP consultant from Sage products. John has worked for ERIS, Interpeace, UN Missions Peace Keeping Operations, UNDP, Government agencies, ministries, and public companies. An effective and experienced ICT Advisor, Business Development Manager, Project Manager and Administrator with extensive political and commercial experience in the management of large diverse and complex programs with special projects mostly in post conflict areas. The programs have being executed in Africa, Sudan, Egypt, Somaliland, Kenya, South Africa, Lesotho and has worked to build capacity within election commissions, set up data centers and financial systems, designed voter registration processes, and managed successful election projects.