EVIDENCE-BASED GOVERNANCE IN THE ELECTRONIC AGE: THE IMPORTANCE OF RECORD KEEPING FOR GOOD GOVERNANCE

SUMMARY SESSION 3, THURSDAY 27 MARCH 2003
0800 TO 1000 EDT

Sites

- Washington

- Botswana

- Ghana

- Tanzania

- Zanzibar (in Tanzania)

- Sierra Leone (via audio)

- Uganda

The Current Situation and Present Needs

In the discussion of the current situation, participating countries began by outlining the current state of their records and access legislation and discussing the role of records in their societies. They then proceeded to discuss the following key issues:

- the fact that governments deal with extensive bodies of records: managing the magnitude of records and also having to shift from manual to computer systems is not easy

- the recognition in many countries that records management is critical to good governance; without reliable and accurate records, it is very difficult to assure accountability, transparency and integrity on the part of public servants and government officials

- the fact that attempts at electronic records management have not yet gone far in many countries, but the knowledge that there have been attempts already to develop electronic records management policies and to institute access legislation; the reality, though, that the move towards electronic government is happening quickly, particularly with human resources and financial management

- the fact that financial information is often the first to be automated, along with personnel and payroll information

- the fact that, while governments may attach great importance to records management, war and civil strife, power failures or natural disasters can lead to the destruction of many records

- the challenge of managing records as government systems are decentralised or restructured

- the need to move from externally supported records management programmes to internally sustained systems

- the need to address the regulatory framework for electronic information, as well as human resources, funding, infrastructure and awareness across government.

The Way Forward

Participants then considered actions that could be taken to improve the record keeping environment in their countries and around the world. They identified the following central issues:

- the importance of ICT strategies to improve efficiency, resolve citizen queries and improve access to information

- the role of national archives and records management departments to assist government in providing guidelines relating to the retention for electronic records

- the need to improve record keeping needs to support anti-corruption initiatives and ensure quality records are available for legal purposes

- the need to raise awareness in government with regard to records

- the need to build capacity and professionalism for managing both manual and electronic records

- the need to strengthen infrastructures for record keeping, including storage facilities for paper and electronic records

- the importance of strong political will, so that records management systems can be strengthened: examples include upgrading the archives section and building a records centre

- the importance of strong and effective laws and policies for the protection of, and access to, information, including freedom of information laws and ICT policies

- the need for IT capacity, and the mainstreaming of records management into government plans and budgets

- the importance of addressing the management of land records as a specific issue, so that systems are in place to manage such records in paper and electronic format

- the value of raising awareness, not only so that the public understands and appreciates the importance of quality electronic records care, but also so that public officials recognise the need to introduce effective electronic government.