



Fostering Trust and Transparency in Governance: Investigating and Addressing the Requirements for Building Integrity in Public Sector Information Systems in the ICT Environment

Overview of the Project

Objectives

The underlying premise of the research project is that if computerisation is to provide the basis for informed decision making and effective service delivery, as well as for addressing corruption through increased transparency, the information generated must be reliable and trustworthy over time. The trustworthiness and reliability of computer applications is affected by the quality of the documentary evidence input to and generated by electronic systems, which should lay an audit trail for accountability. At present, governments are attempting to move to the electronic environment without taking account of the implications for managing records as evidence. Many are seeking to introduce electronic systems based on paper systems that have been poorly managed or have collapsed and to rapidly replace these paper systems.

Focus of the Research Project

The study has primarily focused on pay and personnel records as a means of exploring the issues involved in making the transition to managing records in the ICT environment. It is exploring the management of paper records as inputs to financial and human resource management information systems, the management of electronic records as digital outputs and the links between them. It is also examining the management of digital records scanned into human resource information systems. To broaden the basis of the study and provide comparisons, land registration and management and court information systems are being examined.

Research Issues

The research is exploring:

- the risks associated with the rapid transition to the electronic environment when records are not properly considered as part of, or in relation to, computer applications
- the need to manage electronic records as evidence of government decisions, actions and transactions, management of state resources, delivery of services, and the protection of citizens' rights and privileges.

- the relationship of evidentiary requirements to reform objectives
- the requirements for managing the records of key public sector functions in different media (paper, electronic, digitised).

The Research Team members are examining issues that will help shape the deliverables:

- What impact does records management have on the management of the government functions studied?
- How does the loss of control of records contribute to corruption? What are the opportunities for strengthening anti-corruption initiatives, access to information and electronic government initiatives?
- What are the risks for the governance process and services to the poor if paper and electronic records are not managed? What are the opportunities for strengthening services to the poor by strengthening the management of records, paper and electronic?
- What can be done to create greater demand by citizens for records as evidence and greater political will in governments to introduce solutions?
- How can records management issues be fed effectively into policy development, poverty reduction strategies and fiduciary risk assessments?
- What are the causes of weak records management, paper and electronic? Why are these issues not being addressed adequately? What solutions have emerged?
- How applicable are the lessons learned in managing paper and electronic records in developed countries, where there have been significant investments in finding solutions and how this knowledge can be adapted appropriately to a developing country context?

Methodology

Three approaches have been used to gather information:

- Collecting *qualitative* information about public sector reform, electronic governance initiatives, pay and personnel and records management; this information, derived mainly from internet searches, documents and interviews provides background and context for the research. It also will provide an indication of the links between information processes and recordkeeping.
- Mapping *information flows*. This is a valuable method for identifying weaknesses in systems. Inputs and outputs can be identified and the movement of information analysed. This helps to build a picture of the current processes and controls and provides a basis for understanding records management requirements.
- Conducting *quantitative* research: As far as possible, samples of records are being examined to evaluate the quality of records from a systems perspective. For practical reasons, this can only be a small sample but one that will provide indicative findings.

The sample should provide a basis for developing performance indicators that will help make it possible to measure progress towards improvements in recordkeeping in relation to objectives for public sector reform.

Deliverables

The project will produce four main deliverables that will be available without charge in the public domain:

- route map providing a sequence strategy for moving from a paper-based to an electronic information environment and linked to development targets
- good practice guidance materials
- training materials
- database of case studies, with a report summarising the findings, as teaching and staff development materials.

Location of Case Studies

The Africa region is the principal study area. Case studies relating to personnel and payroll records have been undertaken in Lesotho, Ghana, Tanzania, Zambia and Sierra Leone. An additional study on financial, human resources and land information systems has also been undertaken in the State Government of Karnataka in India. By way of comparison a final study of manual and electronic land information systems will be undertaken in Botswana.