

eGovernment - dot-ORG's Contributions



*eGovernment is the use of information and communications technologies (ICT) to transform government by making it more accessible, effective and accountable.*¹

A range of dot-ORG projects have facilitated the adoption of information and communication technologies (ICT) by government entities and contributed to more accessible, effective and accountable government, or eGovernment. This document highlights some of these contributions and points to lessons learned from those experiences.

Providing Greater Access to Government Information & Facilitating Knowledge Sharing within Government

Within the RITI-Access project, dot-ORG implemented the *Library Informatics System* activity with the National Library of Romania and two county libraries to develop and implement a National Collective Catalogue, a unified point of access to bibliographical information across the country. As a result, 12 counties eventually joined the system.

In Central America, dot-ORG worked to promote connectivity among local governments through the *CONNECTA* projects through a web portal to improve information sharing and access to training for all municipalities, and through the development of a business approach to sustainable connectivity.

Increasing Government Accountability

Through a series of initiatives within the RITI-Access project in Romania, and leveraging strong existing capacities within the Romanian IT private sector, dot-ORG contributed to improved accountability, efficiency and transparency. eGovernment is about much more than computerization of government offices and demands close attention to work processes and human resources, both of which have been key elements of the projects briefly highlighted below.

The *Social Services Assistance Integrated System* in Sibiu County improved public administration in the county by increasing the transparency, efficiency and responsiveness of local government services.



Photo: Training for the Social Services Administration Application in Sibiu, Romania.

¹ eGovernment Handbook,
<http://www.cdt.org/egov/handbook/>

The *Document Management and Tax Automation System* in Giurgiu strengthened the capacity of the Local Council and improves government services delivery to local businesses and citizens by providing easy and quick access to public documents and information.

The *Environmental Integrated Informatics System* in Valcea, which increased the efficiency, transparency and accessibility of environmental permitting procedures.

Supporting Free and Fair Elections

In Rwanda, working in partnership with SatelLife, dot-ORG provided support to the National Electoral Commission to establish a solid digital database of registered voters and to enhance voter registration using personal digital assistants (PDAs).



Photo: A voter registration officer, field-testing the PDA in an open market in Kigali, Rwanda.

Dot-ORG's support in Rwanda focused on enhancing the efficiency of the National Electoral Commission by targeting specific functions where IT could provide significant value-added.

Providing Development Opportunities

Providing development opportunities often starts with capacity building. In Calafat, (Romania), dot-ORG implemented an

eLearning for Local Economic Development activity within the RITI-Access project. This activity was comprised of computer-based learning modules related to key economic and administrative topics and targeted at public servants, business owners, teachers and ordinary citizens.

In addition to capacity building, access to information about job and other development opportunities is often critical. In Slatina (Romania), dot-ORG implemented the *Infosocial Network* activity to improve the ability of local government agencies to provide valued information services to those looking for employment and/or trying to access social services.

In Mali, dot-ORG established 13 *Community Learning and Information Centers (CLICs)*, four of which were hosted by mayors' offices in rural areas. In addition to providing access to telecommunications and computer training services for the local population, the mayors' offices were also able to benefit from such services and became better connected to outside resources and other levels of government, thereby increasing their access to information and resources needed for community development.



Photo: Mayor's Office in Bandiagara, Mali, hosting one of the Community Learning and Information Centers.

Lessons from dot-ORG's Experience

eGovernment at All Levels of Government

Whereas a lot of emphasis has been placed on national eGovernment strategies and eGovernment applications at the higher levels of government, there is much potential for eGovernment applications at the local level. With limited budgetary resources and increased responsibilities, local governments are often struggling to improve the quality of their services and efficiency of their operations. Targeted IT applications can deliver benefits that are certain to strengthen local governments' resolve to more broadly integrate IT in their operations. The key is to identify those IT applications that are most likely to deliver quick and measurable benefits (low-hanging fruits) so as to start a process of change and awareness raising within local governments that is based on experience.

This targeted local eGovernment approach begs a few questions. Can successful targeted IT applications lead to broader eGovernment strategies at the local government level? Can such local leadership spur eGovernment initiatives at the national level?

Challenge of Scale, Replication and Interoperability

Scaling up an initiative such as the use of PDAs for voter registration from a small pilot involving one district to the entire country is very different from trying to scale or replicate targeted eGovernment IT applications within local governments.

However, some common issues emerge:

- Moving beyond the pilot stage and replicating activities across local government entities is difficult because the same local governments often fail to communicate among themselves and are wary of investing money;
- Training and capacity building can become complex as it often involves multiple layers of decision-makers;
- Lack of telecommunication infrastructure and the cost of connectivity often remain key obstacles;
- Inter-operability needs to be addressed as proprietary systems that do not "talk to each other" can hinder necessary linkages between local and national level government units.

CONTACT

Michael Tetelman
dot-ORG Program Director
mtetelma@aed.org

LINKS

DOT-COM web site
<http://www.dot-com-alliance.org>

RELATED DOCUMENTS

RITI-Access Project Brief - details of the Romania local eGovernment projects.



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

