E-Government Potential in Lebanon: An Assessment of Current Situation & Future Potential

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Lebanon after the 16 years war

• Lebanon had to establish domestic stability, to rebuild the country’s infrastructure and to restore basic public services.
• From 1992-1998, different governments broadly succeeded in these respects.
• However, large macroeconomic imbalances were created.
Lebanon since 1998

Domestic demand weak due to:
+ the near-completion of the massive reconstruction of the country’s infrastructure,
+ the tight monetary policy, and
+ the constant unsettled political situation in the region.

Led to a slow down in economic growth.
Lebanon since 1998

- The 1998 government medium-term reform programme did not succeed in meeting the next years targets.
- Lebanon is currently facing its worst economic conditions since the civil war ended in 1990. Real GDP growth rate is around zero. Public debt exceeds 175% of GDP, and the budget deficit exceeds 15% of GDP.
Future Outlook

(1) Intensified fiscal consolidation efforts.
(2) Continuation of upgrading/building of the infrastructure facilities.
(3) Additional investments in the manufacturing & services sectors.
(4) Revival of the IT sector.
(5) Activation of e-commerce activities.
(6) Encourage privatization.
Lebanon’s Agenda to Face the Upcoming Digital Challenges
The vision of e-government is one where government, business, and citizens work together for the benefit of the nation.

Golden opportunity to the public sector to upgrade the quality of civil service delivery.

Processes involving the daily lives of citizens will be transacted electronically.
OMSAR: THE MEAN

Office of the Minister of State for Administrative Reform (OMSAR)

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• On May 12, 1997 the Lebanese government manifested its full involvement and support of a strategic plan for administrative reform.
WHY?

- Provide expert opinion on policies, goals, standards, and procedures for the implementation of adequate technology in the different entities of the Lebanese Government according to a needs assessment scheme.
HOW?

- Reengineering the government’s services to the citizens to provide speedy, efficient, accurate, and effective services.
- Establish a dynamic network (WAN) between all government directories, public agencies, and ministries.
- Establish an information network with Internet support to citizens and to consolidate governance practices.
HOW?

• Establish unified standards to all government entities according to their unique needs and designs.

• Enable the law for Intellectual property protection.

• Establish a network of individual MISs in the different governmental entities to streamline internal affairs.
OMSAR: The Mission

• “Bringing the Lebanese post-war public administration into the 21st century through an optimal and coherent introduction of Institutional Development (Rehabilitation & Reform) and Information Technology (Systems & Communications) measures that render streamlined, transparent and traceable processes fulfilled by Productive Civil Servants for the benefit of both the general public & government.”
The Quest for Modernization

- The Lebanese government identified 3 areas in its quest to modernize its governance model in order to cope with requirements to offer e-government services to the public.

Hard Infrastructure Policies & Procedures  Human Resources
The Model

Management System/Governance
- Policies & Procedures
- Information Technology
- Hard Infrastructure & Software
- Human Resources

Inbound Logistics
- Value-Added Transformation
- Outbound Logistics
- Citizens Care
Hard Infrastructure: Accomplishments

- WAN for the Lebanese University
- Assistance to the Rehabilitation of the Lebanese Administration (ARLA) Program
- Time Attendance & Access Control
- Automation of Civil Service Board
- Information Offices: One Stop-Shop
- Legal Decision Document Management System
- Automation of the Co-operative of Government employees
Hard Infrastructure: On-going

- Land registry
- National employee office
- Electricity of Lebanon
- Beirut water authority
- Customs management system
- Internal security management system
Policies & Procedures

• Creation of national ICT policy in 1999
• Creation of national ICT committee structure in 2000
• Creation of national ICT business plan
• Establishment of the Intellectual property Regulation
• Drafting a law for the creation of Media, Information, and Communications
• Technology Free Zone
• Acceptance of Digital Signature Legislation
• Online banking law passed
• Approval of reduction of trade tariffs on ICT products
• Updating commercial code systems
• Modernizing national tax system
Human Resources

• Establishment of the Institute of Finance to provide formal education to all civil servants in the different ministries in finance & economics
• Restructuring of the management & Development Institute to upgrade civil servants in management & career planning
• Establishment of partnerships with NGOs & Universities for training purposes
• Support training institutes in the Internal Security Forces, Customs, and Armed Forces Academies
• Establishment of Decentralized IS in the government agencies & ministries
Conclusion

• Reaching an Integrated Governance System necessitates changes in structure and culture supported by an enabling IT infrastructure. The Lebanese government has begun the quest for such a vision. Much have been done costing millions of dollars. However, considering the economic situation that is fluctuating, the status quo is really admirable when thinking e-government.
Conclusion

• The biggest challenge of all is the realization of an integrated system. A fact that needs a leadership that believes in walking-the-talk rather than marketing per se. Continuous awareness is a must, and citizens’ involvement is critical so as to establish a self-controlled system. The Lebanese are aware of this fact and joint efforts are being established.
Thank you for your kind attention
References


OMSAR Newsletter (2001), May, p. 15.