

THE NIGERIA EGOVERNMENT CONFERENCE 2019

Lagos, Nigeria; 24 October 2019



Post Conference Report

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Introduction

The maiden conference, which was organised by DigiServe, focused on how government at all levels could leverage technology to make government services accessible to the citizens, drive governance and increase internally generated revenue (IGR). The conference attracted government officials from across the country, including State Governors, Director General and Managing Directors of government agencies, as well as Chief Executive Officers of ICT Companies in the organised private sector.

The conference featured exhibitions of key technology solutions as well as keynote presentations on ICT and governance. Different panel sessions were held, where issues about the imperatives of driving governance with technology solutions, the benefits of ICT in governance and what government must do to harness the efficacy of technology in governance, were discussed.

Welcome Address

The conference was opened by Engineer Lanre Ajayi, Managing Director of Digiserve. In his opening remarks, the CEO of DigiServe, Engr Lanre Ajayi stressed the fact that Nigeria is faced with several challenges including poor economic growth, low revenue generation, kidnapping, terrorism, huge unemployment, poor service delivery, particularly in health and education. He however expressed confidence that the challenges could be addressed by the application of appropriate technologies in government service delivery, hence the maiden edition of the eGovernment Conference was organised to proffer solutions to the identified challenges in the government circle.

Communique

Communique Issued at The Nigeria eGovernment Conference 2019, Organized by DigiServe At The Sheraton Hotel, Ikeja On October 24, 2019.

Presentations were focused on eGovernment, technology and how technology solutions will drive governance a raise Internally Generated Revenue (IGR) of state governments.

Some of the resolutions reached to include the following:

1. The introduction of eGovernment applications has been beneficial to governments at all levels and it has helped governments in providing eGovernment services to the people. eGovernment should therefore be encouraged among Government Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs)
2. To achieve eGovernment across MDAs, there is a need to increase the number of fibre connectivity deployments from the current 42,000km to 127,000km. Nigeria needs an additional 30,000km of fibre infrastructure, aside from the expectations from operators to expand fibre development
3. Nigeria needs to deepen eGovernment by examining four dimensions as directed by ITU, which includes: Infrastructure, Policy, Governance and Outreach dimensions. Nigeria needs a policy that will protect local investors.
4. To achieve a full eGovernment process, the government must engage with the citizens, consider cost, freedom of individuals, short term gains and long-term gains. Government must ensure automated processes in governance, reduce manual processes of accessing government activities, and make use of eGovernment processes to raise IGR in government.
5. Powering governance with ICT is key to achieving eGovernment, given that technology has been evolving and has compelled the government to go digital to address the needs of the people and serve the citizens better by using technology to reduce the cost of governance and improve government services to the people. Technology evolution has also compelled the government to automate its services and make government services accessible online. eGovernance is a functionality of eGovernment, designed to deliver government services online and make accessibility easy for citizens.
6. The conference looked at the possible barriers militating against achieving eGovernment among MDAs and identified some barriers like insecurity, policy inconsistency, lack of coordination of government activities, lack of adequate infrastructure, sabotage among social miscreants, and diverse culture of Nigerian citizens.
7. It was however resolved that in addressing the identified barriers, eGovernment must be built on certain pillars like processes, people, and technology, while paying more attention to people because people drive processes, using technology.
8. Internet connectivity and access gap still widely exist among African nations, especially nations in West Africa where Nigeria belongs. Countries that have bridged internet connectivity and access gap were cited. Nigeria alongside other West African counties must bridge the internet connectivity gap for the common good of the people.

9. The conference was however worried that Africa still lags with 37 percent penetration in eGovernment process execution, which was blamed on lack of fibre infrastructure, lack of electricity, over-regulation, among others.

10. The conference blamed the government for its short-sightedness to the challenges affecting the growth of eGovernment among MDAs. Industry stakeholders need to hold special sessions with National Assembly members and make impute in the legislation of the identified issues.

11. Although so many resources have been committed into eGovernment across MDAs, most activities of MDAs are still in silos. The need for harmonization of the activities of all government MDAs was therefore recommended.

12. The issue of the high cost of internet access was raised at one of the panel sessions, and it was observed that despite the five broadband submarine cable operators that have berthed at the shores of Nigeria, the cost of internet access is still high at the hinterlands. Nigeria, therefore, needs ubiquitous internet access to drive eGovernment in Nigeria.

13. The conference stressed the need for data sovereignty that will protect local internet service providers, grow local internet traffic and localise internet traffic generated within Nigeria. Currently, Nigeria has between 40-50 per cent local internet traffic, but it could be increased to 80 per cent if local internet service providers are encouraged with favourable policies.

14. The panel session also discussed national burning issues that could mar eGovernance if not properly handled. The issue of the proposed nine per cent communication tax bill and the Unstructured Supplementary Service Data (USSD) charges by banks and telecoms operators were the major national issues discussed. The panel condemned the planned introduction of the communication tax bill and called on the government to compel banks to also stop USSD charges to bank customers, since the government does not want telecoms operators to implement the USSD charges, even though the Telco's own and manage the USSD infrastructure.

15. The panel session wants Galaxy Backbone to extend its eGovernment services beyond MDAs, to cover the private sector like homes, hospitals, schools and offices.

16. Nigeria needs ICT solutions to monitor and control online businesses that generate revenue online without paying taxes.

17. There is a need for collaboration between government agencies and private ICT players that provide eGovernment solutions.

18. Nigeria has been a bit slow in adopting ICT. Government must embrace technology. Some MDAs don't have websites. The government, therefore, needs to mainstream ICT to be at par with global economies. The issue of weak infrastructure and the high cost of installing technology equipment should be addressed.

19. eGovernment will support infrastructure sharing, accountability, speed, transparency, e-voting and should be encouraged.

20. Citizens expectations from the government are high and to live up to speed, the government must embrace technology to drive eGovernment. Government must be abreast with new technologies to serve the citizens better and reduce corruption in governance.

Summary of Keynote Addresses

- **DR ERNEST NDUKWE, CHAIRMAN, MTN NIGERIAN BOARD OF DIRECTORS, AND FORMER EXECUTIVE VICE CHAIRMAN, NIGERIAN COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION (NCC)**

He delivered the first keynote address. He said the government and the private sector have been a bit slow in adopting ICT. According to him, some government agencies don't even have a website and they need the website to be more accessible to the citizens. He advised the government to adopt new technology solutions to be abreast with global technology trends.

- **PROF. UMAR GARBA DANBATTI, EXECUTIVE VICE CHAIRMAN OF NCC**

He delivered the second keynote address. He considered the theme: "e-Government: Powering Governance with Information and Communications Technologies (ICT)" very apt, as it presents another unique opportunity for industry stakeholders as a nation, to look inwards and re-examine our e-government initiatives within the broad context of the global trend where ICT has become a driving force for all sectors across economies around the world.

Differentiating between government and eGovernment, Danbatta said governance encapsulates structures and processes that are designed to ensure accountability, transparency, responsiveness, rule of law, stability, equity and inclusiveness, empowerment, and broad-based participation among citizens in a nation. In a broad sense, governance is about the culture and institutional environment in which citizens and stakeholders interact among themselves and participate in public affairs. He however said Electronic government or "e-Government" constitutes the use of ICT in governance to provide public services, improve managerial effectiveness and promote democratic values; as well as provide a regulatory framework that facilitates information dissemination. According to him, governments around the world use ICT for the exchange of information with citizens and businesses on topics such as tax compliance, public utility services, as well as vehicle and voting registration. Often, the introduction of e-government services creates a more customer-friendly culture.

He said e-government could take the form of application of ICT to enhance efficient, effective and accountable exchanges along these four primary government service delivery tracks namely: Government-to-Citizen or Government-to-Customer (G2C); Government-to-Business (G2B); Government-to-Government (G2G); and Government-to-Employee (G2E).

Danbatta explained that the introduction of e-government applications has been beneficial to governments in several ways. Most significantly, in the area of public procurement, electronic applications have expanded government access to potential suppliers and increased the number of offers received promptly.

Citing the Nigerian National Telecommunications Policy of 2000, Danbatta said the policy seeks to make Nigeria an ICT-driven country in Africa and a key player in the information society and also use IT for

education; creation of wealth; poverty eradication; job creation; governance; health; and agriculture. He remarked that the adoption of ICT in governance would increase IGR, bring efficiency and convenience to government services delivery process, curb corruption practices and create a lot of high skilled labour in the country.

Danbatta was of the view that to reverse cases of huge unemployment, corruption, crime, low internally-generated revenue (IGR) and leakages in government revenue, among other issues, is to use ICT to drive government's internal processes and service delivery to its citizens and other stakeholders with the capacity to enhance efficiency and convenience in the delivery of government services and create a high skilled workforce in the country. He listed some of the challenges of adopting new technology to include lack of adequate Information Technology (IT) infrastructure; epileptic power/electricity supply; reduced budgetary allocation for ICT, lack of trained and qualified personnel and the resistance to change attitude by public servants and other related issues.

He said "The Commission is actively exploring the utilisation of television white space (TVWS) technology to expand affordable broadband services to rural areas, while we have issued Infrastructure Company (InfraCo) Licences to some organisations to deploy fibre across the geopolitical zones with Access Points in all the 774 local government areas of the Federation.

He promised that in line with the next level agenda of the current administration, the Commission hopes to increase the number of fibre deployments in Nigeria to 127,000 kilometres from its current 42,000 kilometres of fibre connectivity in the country. Through the InfraCo initiatives, therefore, the Commission expects an additional 30,000 kilometres of fibre to be added. Danbatta said Nigeria needed to deepen eGovernment by examining four dimensions as directed by International Telecoms Union (ITU), which include: Infrastructure, Policy, Governance and Outreach dimensions, and Nigeria needed policy that would protect local investors in Nigeria.

Summary of Presentations

- **MR OLUSOLA TENIOLA, President, Association of Telecoms Companies of Nigeria (ATCON)**

In his paper presentation, said the data-centric landscape was yet to be fully defined and crystallised in sub-Saharan Africa. Citing Nigeria as an example where there has been recorded evidence of latent demand for localised content and associated services, Teniola said the potential remained untapped due to multi-faceted recurring structural challenges.

According to him, the infrastructure gap in sub-Saharan Africa remained massive, just as African Finance Corporation (AFC) estimates that USD 3 trillion over a 30-year period is needed to address the infrastructure gap in the sub-Saharan African region. He said many African governments are struggling with budget deficits against budget sizes dwarfed by the average annual revenue line, yet the reality is that Africa and sub-Saharan Africa, in particular, offer many opportunities for future growth in the mobile broadband space. The challenge as always is what comes first, effective government policies or the ability to manage technological innovation in the absence of an environment that is characterised by much uncertainty.

Teniola however said the ICT sector remained fragmented and the telecom terrain in a state of flux in the absence of an updated regulatory regime that includes the fundamental application of regulatory tools and directives that promotes local content and prepares a foreseeable landscape for the data-centric digitalisation that the new paradigm requires. Continually focusing on infrastructural rules that have a voice-only technology ambit to it will not suffice and misses the underpinning adaptation that technology has brought as a disruptive enabler for AI, Machine Learning and Robotics to exist and that will be common with the commercialisation of 5G networks in just under 7 to 8 years from now.

According to him, the industry reluctantly recognised the sheer complexity that this brings to our current way of operating and are yet to absorb the nature of this technological advancement in addressing our multi-lingual society that exhibits a technology deficit from one spectrum (haves) to the other end (have nots) when our basic education and tertiary institutions are still reeling out Computer graduates, taught in COBOL or FORTRAN only.

Without collaboration and partnership being fostered, we run the risk of defining and creating at best islands of progressive digital communities and landscapes that are not interconnected under a 'winner takes all attitude', with negative socio-economic flaws, Teniola said.

- **MR ALI MAGASHI, Managing Director, Kitari Consult**

In his presentation titled “**E-Governance – The People’s Expectations from Government in a Digital Age**”, drew a thin line between eGovernment and eGovernance. He quoted UNESCO’s definition of eGovernance as ‘the public sector’s use of information and communication technologies to improve information and service delivery, encouraging citizen participation in the decision-making process and making government more accountable, transparent and effective. But in comparing e-Governance with eGovernment, Magashi said e-Government focused on the utilization of ICT to streamline and improve the business of government. He sees e-Governance as a wider concept that defines and assesses the impacts technologies are having on the practice and administration of governments and the relationships between public servants and the wider society. He however said the two terms were often used interchangeably. He listed the drivers for e-Governance to include: Creating a better business environment; Customers online, not in line; Strengthening good governance with broader public participation and Improving government’s productivity and efficiency.

Benefits, Challenges and Risks of eGovernance

Magashi in his presentation said e-Governance would enable 24x7 borderless access to government information; Alignment with international strategy, mitigation of external barriers; Citizen engagement and participation; Common standards and increased interoperability; Cost-effective procurement / e-Procurement; Decentralisation, deregulation and legislative reform; Development of infrastructure; Accelerated E-Commerce; and Efficiency and competitiveness. He however listed some of the challenges of eGovernance to include: Political; Strategic; Legislative; Legal and Regulatory; Funding; Digital Divide; Business related issues; and Technical Infrastructure. In the area of risk, Magashi said a lack of political backing would bring about higher risks of failure and an increase in the digital divide. Other risks are, Poor take-up/lack of awareness; Resistance to change from the various stakeholders; the Complexity of projects which use the latest technology, therefore increasing risks relating to Time and budget overruns; Quality issues; and Failure to meet client’s expectations.

How ICT Can Assist Governments

Magashi, in his presentation, said digital technologies remained integral to the way governments operate whether at a policy or an implementation level. He said the government must consider the use of ICT to digitise all aspects of governance, use ICT as a critical tool for policymaking and ensure that government use ICT in transparently disseminating information.

In the delivery of public services, each government department must operate line-of-business information systems that are key in the provision of the respective public service.

- **MR MOHAMMED BADARU ABUBAKAR, Executive Governor of Jigawa State**

He spoke on eGovernance implementation. In his paper presentation titled “Imperatives in eGovernment Implementation”, he said e-Governance implementation in Nigeria has been occurring haphazardly nationwide with varying degrees of success at the state level and insufficient interface with the federal government to formulate standards and ensure interoperability.

According to him, it remains true today that the push for E-governance has more to do with improved revenue generation than improved service delivery. This is not necessarily a bad thing as the transformation ultimately comes with a corresponding improvement in efficiency and service delivery, but the bias for the underlying architecture is often profit-driven which sometimes comes at the expense of optimum service or complete neglect of service delivery centres that are not revenue-generating.

He however said the imperative of e-Governance from the Nigerian perspective could be predicated on the following:

Curbing corruption and plugging leakages; Process transparency and improved service delivery which will create end-user confidence and justify revenue collection or increase.

Factors working against e-Governance Implementation

According to the Governor, change resistance at the top management level and the perception by vested interests that deployment will upset the apple cart, as well as resistance by middle and lower management because of fear of job loss and illicit diverted government revenue, are some factors working against eGovernment implementation. In the extreme, this can result in sabotage and the creation of administrative bottlenecks to slow or prevent implementation. Other factors according to the Governor, include Inadequate or complete absence of underlying infrastructure making initial deployment costs prohibitive; Obsolescence due to slow implementation; Digital illiteracy and lack of e-readiness and the wide digital divide.

- **SIR DEMOLA ALADEKOMO, Founder, Chams Plc**

In his paper presentation on “eGovernment: Powering Governance with ICT”, explained how ICT implementation in governance would drive IGR, Financial Inclusion, Urbanization/Rural to Urban Migration, and reduced impact on infrastructure, increase better living standards of the citizens, bring about seamless administration, minimal response time, among others.

According to him, ICT would bring governance closer to people, empower the people, reduce poverty, increase better reporting, better analytics, and enable better planning.

- **MR. BISI ALI, Former Chairman, Osun and Oyo State Internal Revenue Service**

In his paper presentation with the theme: Powering Government with ICT, looked at current technology trends that will assist government increase their Internally Generated Revenue (IGR), such as Big Data, Analytics, Artificial intelligence (AI), Machine Learning, The Internet of Things (IoT), Mobility and Cloud Computing, among others. Taken individually or together, these trends have the power to increase taxpayer satisfaction, empower tax agency employees, optimize operations and modernize services. This is where digital transformation comes in, Ali said.

According to him, there is an increasing recognition that digitalization and the exploitation of digital data have the potential to revolutionize the operation of economies well beyond the minor disruption seen so far.

- **MR. TUNDE COKER, Managing Director, Rack Centre**

He spoke on the need for data hosting and data sovereignty in Nigeria. In his presentation on Local Data Hosting and Data Sovereignty, quoted **Section 14.1** of the Guidelines for Nigerian Content Development in ICT, which makes it mandatory for Data and Information Management Firms to host government data locally within the country and shall not for any reason host any government data outside the country without express approval from the National Information Technology Development Agency (NITDA). He explained that Apple has a data centre in China, and are always in compliance with the data laws of the country. He also pointed out that International companies rent Russian server space and pay Russian data services firms to ensure compliance with data laws thus increasing capital flow to Russian companies. He said 17 million Ecuadorian personal data were breached in September 2019 and that there was a massive Bulgarian Government Data Breach in 2019, which he said, underscored the importance of local hosting of data in Nigeria.

Recommendations

- The conference, having discussed paper presentations, concluded that without collaboration and partnership being fostered, stakeholders run the risk of defining and creating at best islands of progressive digital communities and landscapes that are not interconnected under a 'winner takes all attitude', with negative socio-economic flaws. The conference, therefore, recommended that industry stakeholders must collaborate to drive a common front on eGovernance.
- It also recommended that the Federal Government must play a more dominant role, including omnibus legislation to enforce compliance. We have had ICT4D plan 2004, Nat e-Govt strategy 2011, subscribed to OGP in 2016 for 80 per cent obit biz to go online by 2020 and e-Govt master plan 2019.
- It also recommended the growth of ICT infrastructure but said putting infrastructure in place alone does not guarantee e-governance adoption and implementation.
- They were of the view that the federal government must create a national framework for ICT through NITDA that must cascade to States and LGA; Provide Infrastructure such as Power and Developmental Framework for ICT Development.
- They also called for a Periodic Review of Regulations in line with present realities and disruptions in the industry, and the need to support local ICT products through the support of the National Information Technology Development Agency (NITDA) and the National Office of Technology Acquisition and Promotion (NOTAP).
- It also recommended the creation of a framework for the adoption of foreign ICT solutions to solve peculiar local challenges and to create incentives for private players to participate very strongly.
- Other recommendations include the need to galvanize people for training and retraining and also the provision of sustainable public-private partnership (PPP) frameworks for the development of the ICT across all levels of government.
- To achieve eGovernment across MDAs, the conference recommended an increase in the number of fibre connectivity deployments from the current 42,000km to 127,000km, with an additional 30,000km of fibre infrastructure, aside from the expectations from operators to expand fibre development.

Panel Sessions

Seven panel sessions were held at the Nigeria eGovernment Conference. The panel speakers for each session can be seen in the event program (Annex).

Key Points from Panel Sessions

- In one of the panel sessions at the conference the Managing Director, Galaxy Backbone, **Mr Yusuf Kazaure**, stressed the need for every Ministry, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) of government to be digitally connected and gave instances of how Galaxy Backbone is ensuring that every ministry is connected and have access to the internet through its national shared data centre. According to him, the data centre now manages 75 per cent of government websites. Aside from infrastructure, Galaxy Backbone provides capacity building, in line with its mandate to ensure that the e-government master plan works in Nigeria.
- **President of ATCON, Mr Olusola** Teniola said Nigeria has a large population, with a large number of young demographic but that ICT is still fragmented. He talked about prioritising the rolling out of eGovernance since there is an advocacy to provide infrastructure in the rural areas and data harmonisation.
- **President, Association of Licensed Telecoms Operators of Nigeria (ALTON), Engr. Gbenga Adebayo**, who stressed on harmonisation of government activities, using ICT, said each of the ministries has some level of autonomy and wants to maintain that, but explained the need for industry stakeholders to invest in infrastructure. Telecoms operators who spoke at the panel session, said they have been able to separate technology as a business and social improvement. 9mobile representative at the panel session said the telecoms company has been able to partner with World Bank to provide tech hubs with internet access. They, therefore, stressed the need for a genuine partnership with the government, but however said telecoms operators can't sustain the cost of installing equipment in the rural area, hence the need for incentives that will drive the rural rollout of telecoms services.
- **Managing Director, eStream, Mr Muyiwa Ogungboye**, said the business of telecom remained a continuous investment. Infrastructure must be maintained and improved upon cost a lot of money. The private sector has a lot to play, and funding is a major issue. To address the challenges, Ogungboye said the government must be quick in adopting new technologies that will drive governance.
- In another panel session, **the Managing Director of Rack Centre, Mr Tunde Coker** said a lot of government data is hosted abroad and suggested the need to have an African data centre, which makes us highly competitive and increases our internally generated revenue. He advised governments not to concentrate on collecting money only, but to work towards data integration using ICT to identify people, monitoring and recovering of revenue, online payment, assessment and remittance profiling, Coker said.

Other Recommendations

More recommendations were made after the panel sessions.

- Nigeria needs to deepen eGovernment by examining four dimensions as directed by ITU, which includes: Infrastructure, Policy, Governance and Outreach dimensions. Nigeria needs a policy that will protect local investors.
- To achieve a full eGovernment process, the government must engage with the citizens, consider cost, freedom of individuals, short term gains and long-term gains. Government must ensure automated processes in governance, reduce manual processes of accessing government activities, and make use of eGovernment processes to raise IGR in government.
- The conference looked at the possible barriers militating against achieving eGovernment among MDAs and identified some barriers like insecurity, policy inconsistency, lack of coordination of government activities, lack of adequate infrastructure, sabotage among social miscreants, and diverse culture of Nigerian citizens.
- It was however resolved that in addressing the identified barriers, eGovernment must be built on certain pillars like processes, people, and technology, while paying more attention to people because people drive processes, using technology.

Annexe

The resources listed here can be downloaded from egovernment.ng/downloads

- 1) Event Program
- 2) List of attendees
- 3) Paper Presentations (Mr Ali Magashi Paper Presentation; Mr Olusola Teniola Paper Presentation; Jigawa State Governor)