

Integrated e-Government

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Executive Summary

The Integrated E-Government Programme (i-Gov) is a government operated information and communication technology (ICT) project with the overall aim of integrating all the services provided by the various agencies of the government of Qatar into a unified system. The intention is to make all government interactions, information and transaction services, available electronically through a single access point, for all "users" (citizens, residents, visitors and businesses). The integration and standardisation of all government systems, infrastructure and processes is required to achieve this goal.

There are also important secondary goals. The integration of e-government services, and other positive knock-on effects of the programme, will increase the availability, accessibility, productivity and effectiveness of the provision of government services to users; increase the efficiency of government through the streamlining of systems and innovative use of ICT; assist with cooperation between different government agencies; improve the transparency of government processes; and increase the involvement of end-users in the provision of services.

i-Gov was established and launched in 2006 as one of nine major programmes under the Supreme Council of Information and Communication Technology (ictQATAR), a government organisation established in 2004 to accelerate the process of creating an information-based society. i-Gov was conceived and structured to support Qatar's national development goals. The Qatari National Vision (QNV) was crafted to provide a strategy that could guide the country until 2030 in terms of human, social, economic and environmental development. It recognised that improved ICT would benefit all sectors, further political reforms and help Qatar become a fully developed nation. ictQATAR is therefore well positioned to support the QNV through the use of

ICT, with the following objectives: to enrich the quality of life in Qatar by connecting people to technologies; and to encourage modernisation, increase economic efficiency, help create a capable and motivated workforce, broaden access to social services, and create a sustainable knowledge-based online society through the identification and implementation of appropriate ICT programmes.

With these objectives in mind, the i-Gov programme was established. Specifically, i-Gov is expected to make government more efficient, creating productivity and competitiveness gains for businesses, enhancing investment opportunities and improving services to individuals. i-Gov will create demand for ICT products and services, encouraging the development of the sector as well as its resources and talent. i-Gov has also established a Marketing and Awareness initiative which will help sell technology, raising its usage. In these ways, i-Gov will tackle the lack of skilled manpower and the development of technological capability, which are key development challenges.

The major achievements of i-Gov to date have been (examined in detail in the following section):

- The establishment of a single access point in February 2008 for all interaction with the government. The portal is called Hukoomi (www.gov.qa) and it has enabled the provision of hundreds of online services through a single website/portal.
- A total of 1.4m e-transactions were conducted through Hukoomi by the end of 2008. More than the 1.3m e-transactions carried out in Qatar between 2003 and 2007.
- The introduction of numerous online government services. There are now over 300 information services,¹

¹ Information services solely involve the provision of information by government entities to users rather than transaction services which involve a two-way exchange, such as the provision of a document or license.

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and over 60 transaction services available through Hukoomi.

- Increased channels of communication between the government and its citizens. Mobile, e-mail and SMS are all now used as a result of i-Gov initiatives.
 - A comprehensive project-management reference manual has been created. The manual sets out common architecture, standards and procedures for developing all government ICT systems, facilitating improvements in integration and efficiency.
 - Efficiency and transparency gains have been made within government
 - A strategic master-plan for 2006 to 2011, involving the implementation of 54 initiatives, has been created by i-Gov in collaboration with numerous “stakeholders” (government entities, users and other parties who will be involved with initiatives). The master-plan aims to improve the infrastructure and legislation of the ICT sector, bring new government services online and it sets out a project development model for each initiative.
 - A governance model has been created for the i-Gov, improving the chances of success by involving the highest levels of government and allowing for end-user participation in decision making processes.
 - A total of 17 i-Gov initiatives are currently in progress and an additional 12 i-Gov initiatives are planned for launch in early 2009.
 - Shared government infrastructure projects have been initiated, such as a government network, data centre, resources planning and a government contact centre. These projects represent the backend required for the full functioning of Hukoomi.
 - i-Gov has helped foster a focus on the users and a pan-government approach in relation to the provision of e-services.
- i-Gov has illustrated creative planning and management through its development of a number of temporary solutions to maintain the momentum of the programme while a permanent solution is established.
 - Malomatia has assisted the expansion in private ICT sector activity through i-Gov partnerships with the private sector. Malomatia is a programme that aims to foster ICT skills, entrepreneurship and develop local SMEs by acting as a delivery arm for the i-Gov programme and learning and retaining skills from the international consultants.

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The master-plan designed by ictQATAR foresees the implementation of 54 initiatives in a series of four separate waves from 2006 to 2011:

- The original planning envisioned an initial wave of initiatives that would begin implementation from 2006 and would mainly set about establishing the infrastructure, standards, basic awareness and capabilities training that would enable the full integration of e-government. The initial phase also involved bringing basic services online, such as visa and residency services and government procurement services.
- The second wave initiatives began in May 2007 and included creating necessary legislation, security requirements and making a number of additional services available online such as the personal documents services (IDs/Passports) and export/import services.
- The third wave of initiatives began in November 2007 and included the extension of infrastructure to improve accessibility of government services, with initiatives to install self-service terminals and mobile phone/SMS systems, as well as the introduction of a number of more specific services such as public library services and legal services. Many of the transactional services are yet to be actually launched from this wave of initiatives, other than the zakat and charity services.
- The final wave of initiatives began in November 2008 and included final infrastructural requirements such as a data warehouse and the introduction of other services that have required more time to implement, for example, building permits services and inheritance services.

The master-plan also separated each of the 54 initiatives into sub-categories, initiatives that:

Address the ICT “Environment” through legislation, policies, guidelines and standards, such as the e-commerce policy, security policy, and data protection policy, and also through marketing and awareness campaigns.

Address ICT “Readiness” through the construction of infrastructure and development of capabilities that will become available to all government entities. This sub-category involves the backend elements that are necessary to offer government e-services through a unified system such as a government network to interlink different entities; a centralised, secure government data centre; and payment platforms, self-service terminals, Hukoomi, and creating cross-government login details for users.

Address ICT “Usage” by increasing the number of actual e-services available online such as businesses registration, visa services and resident permits.

ictQATAR leads the projects in the first two sub-categories although it will contract out a large amount of the work done. Most initiatives are in the third sub-category and are usually led by the government agency relevant to the service, in which case, ictQATAR will establish project steering committees involving the lead agent and other stakeholders. ictQATAR will still provide oversight, technical advice and ensure objectives are met, taking on the role of the programme management office for the delivery of the master-plan.

Governance Model

ictQATAR has developed an effective governance model for i-Gov involving the highest level of government and a broad range of stakeholders, giving the programme full political top-down and bottom-up support. This is achieved through the regular meeting of various levels of management committees listed below. The higher levels

of these committees have adopted a rigorous approach to portfolio management, prioritising projects according to how well they are expected to achieve overall government objectives and ensuring that there is a clear economic business case established early on in the development of each project.

Sponsor Group - a high-level group which includes the Heir Apparent and the ministers of finance, labour, interior and the secretary general of ictQATAR. The group meets every six months to review overall strategy, plans and progress.

i-Gov Steering Committee - chaired by the secretary general of ictQATAR, this committee includes the directors of the General Information Management Office (GIMO), Strategic Planning and the i-Gov programme manager. It meets monthly to discuss and resolve external stakeholder issues.

Programme Management Committee - chaired by the director of GIMO and includes the i-Gov Programme Manager, GIMO Platform and Operations Managers, and the section manager of the i-Gov project management office. The committee meets every two weeks to review progress and discuss deliverable and directional issues.

Project Steering Committees - these committees are chaired by the lead organisations within a specific project which will either be ictQATAR or a government entity. Their purpose is to oversee the progress of specific projects. The committees will include representatives from different entities and GIMO projects managers who are able to give directional advice to external stakeholders.

Project Delivery Teams - composed of stakeholders and ictQATAR members, with the latter providing the technical knowhow. They are in charge of project delivery.

User Committees - meetings relating to cross-governmental initiatives which are attended by relevant experts and the stakeholders in the initiative. The meetings provide progress reports and reviews and ensure the quality of project deliverables. For example, in the user committee for the Government Network initiative, seven experts from government entities, who are specialised in government networks, meet to contribute to project development, represent their departments and provide feedback.

There are also quarterly ICT forums which are attended by all government Chief Information Officers and ICT managers. The i-Gov programme officers share progress reports with respect to new initiatives, improvements, policies, requirements and experiences with the attendees and receive feedback. This encourages broad participation, an exchange of information, expertise and knowledge as well as the development of a professional IT community.

Initiative Development Model

ictQATAR has set out standard guidelines for i-Gov for the development of each initiative to ensure that the best strategies are identified. The development process is separated into three phases which constitute a well-defined project lifecycle. During each phase relevant stakeholders will be involved, collaborate and share their expertise to ensure success and create an ICT environment that is as standardised as possible. The phases are:

Strategic Articulation - assessing the current status of the area being targeted; benchmarking potential strategies against at least five best practices from other countries; selecting a target model for the initiative; and developing the model to include a project proposal, justification, definition of the programme requirements,

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costs, budgeting and timeline. In terms of the i-Gov programme, for most of the initiatives, this stage mainly took place during 2006 and 2007.

Procurement - issuing a request for proposals; defining the requirements; and delivering the identified solutions. Delivery always includes operational support for at least one year to encourage the development of a sustainable private sector. Through the Government E-Procurement initiative, which aims to standardise all government tendering via electronic processes, i-Gov is enabling the role of central contracting and procurement agency on behalf of the entire government.

Execution - further project design, implementation, testing of software and hardware and monitoring of the initiative. Most active i-Gov initiatives have now reached this development stage. Hukoomi was implemented in February 2008 and a total of 17 initiatives reached the execution phase in 2008 out of a total of 54 initiatives that are planned for completion by 2011. A further 12 initiatives are expected to begin execution in early 2009 with more than 21 initiatives expected to be launched later in the year.

Additionally to the lifecycle, common standards, methodologies and templates have been constructed for i-Gov, for the development of initiatives and for reporting and managing the updates that are applied to them.

The initiatives are also being implemented in a series of four waves. This helps encourage a continuous stream of creative strategies to cope with the enormous challenge of fully utilising technological capabilities in a constantly changing environment. The phased approach also enables different aspects of development to be tackled at different times, balancing initiatives that target policies, processes or systems or that tackle the environment, readiness or usage.

The majority of existing initiatives are expected to become fully operational during 2010 while additional initiatives and current plans cover the period until 2015. During 2010 and 2011 a second generation of initiatives will be developed which will cover the period until 2020, maintaining the momentum for the creation of new initiatives and helping Qatar achieve its long-term goals for 2030 as outlined in the QNV. This strategy will again enable ictQATAR to meet the challenge of implementing projects in an environment in which technology solutions and available infrastructure are changing rapidly and the objectives and priorities of government agencies and needs of users are also evolving over time. The strategic master-plan is structured so that it can easily be adapted over time to the changing environment.

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Services Online

There are currently over 300 information services and over 60 electronic transaction services available through Hukoomi. Information services are offered across a broad spectrum of government related areas and often provide the information and documentation necessary to transact government services where online transactions are not yet available. The i-Gov master plan envisions that all the informational services will also be online as transactional in coming years. In terms of the actual transaction services on offer, the government of Qatar is a regional leader.

Examples of complete transaction services currently provided through the portal, with online electronic payment and full processing, include: resident permits; bill and fine payments; driving licence applications; visa applications; exit permits; health card applications; and seven commercial registration related services. All of the Hukoomi services can be seen at www.gov.qa on the “View All Services” link on the sidebar under “Services”. If planned increases are implemented there will be over 10 times the current number of services on offer by 2015.

The Commercial Registration initiative provides the necessary e-services, guidelines and interactive information for setting up a business in Qatar, including commercial registration, permits and all licences required to begin, renew and closeout business operations. The first phase of the project has been completed and it is now possible to register new companies online. The current phase of development will make the full range of business registration services available online including entity approvals and licensing and permits for various commodities. The establishment of a business has been greatly simplified and streamlined through a single point of access rather than the former requirements to contact numerous government agencies.

Some other government services that will be available online through the i-Gov programme are: Building Permits Services; Consumer Protection Services; Copyright Protection Services; Environment Protection Services; and Legal Services to Residents and Businesses.

Accessibility

The i-Gov programme has increased the number of channels of communication between the government and its citizens. Mobile, e-mail and SMS are all now used as a result of i-Gov initiatives such as SMS Mobile Notification and Communication Systems.

Reference Manual

A major achievement carried out during the preparation stage of i-Gov was the creation of a lengthy comprehensive reference manual outlining the architecture and standards for all ICT related initiatives across the entire government. The manual provides a blueprint for government ICT framework, infrastructure, application standards and policies and enables the standardisation of systems, processes and technical solutions across the entire government, assisting integration. There is an agreed process for updating the manual so that it will be adaptable to changes in technology and to changes in the structure of government. The manual is currently being reviewed by the council of ministers and is likely to become enforceable in law, obliging all government agencies to comply with its instructions.

Efficiency and Transparency Gains

All i-Gov initiatives will enhance the efficiency and trans-

parency of government but the following initiatives are of particular note for their clear and direct impact in this area:

Government E-Procurement - This initiative, which will be operated through the Hukoomi portal, has created an automated government e-tendering system, which was launched in December 2008, enabling the whole e-tendering process from evaluation through to selection to take place online. The system has initially been launched with two pilot agencies, ictQATAR and the State Audit Bureau, who are currently using the system for all of their tenders. The system will be rolled out to other government entities during 2009. This initiative will substantially increase the transparency of the tendering process by clearly setting out each step of the process online. It will also increase efficiency by making it easier to update tenders and submit documents.

Government Resources Planning - This initiative involves the automation and integration of human and finance resource planning systems across all government entities with the specific aim of consolidating the workflow and increasing transparency and efficiency. Once implemented users will benefit from greater efficiency in processing transactions and decision makers will benefit from greater capacity to plan and control resources.

Employment and Recruitment Services - This initiative has established the official job recruitment site for the state of Qatar. Once automated, the service will save time, work and resources when identifying the right candidate to meet a vacancy. The initiative will also offer services such as CV writing, career guidance and provide information on labour laws, employment and recruitment regulations, procedures and pre-employment training opportunities. It will also standardise procedures and increase the transparency of the operations of the government.

Customs Clearance Services - This initiative will create an automated, paper-free and streamlined system which will provide essential information to residents and businesses regarding Customs clearance procedures. The initiative will also provide a one-stop service for the approval of trade declarations. Again, there are clear efficiency and transparency gains to be made.

Strategic Master-Plan

The creation of a strategic master-plan by ictQATAR for the implementation of the entire i-Gov programme is a major achievement in itself involving vast amounts of work. The master-plan, was created in collaboration with numerous stakeholders and outlined the introduction of four phases of 54 initiatives for the period from 2006 until 2011. The master-plan is designed to be flexible and adaptable to the changing environment of new technologies and government reform.

Governance Model

The establishment of a strong governance model with high level and broad representation is another major achievement of ictQATAR and helps ensure political support for the i-Gov programme. The model is described in more detail in the next section.

Active Initiatives

There are now a total of 17 initiatives in progress and a further 12 are planned for launch in early 2009. The majority of the initiatives in progress have reached the implementation phase of development. The strategic articulation development stage has been completed for 14 initiatives, although not all initiatives require strategic articulation.

