

USING ICTS TO STRENGTHEN GOVERNMENT TRANSPARENCY AND RELATIONS WITH CITIZENS IN KOREA

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Executive Summary

This case study focuses on how information technologies are being used not only to increase the efficiency of public administration but also to strengthen citizen-government connections in Korea. The field of information and communication technology (ICT) is one example in which promising practices, and contributions to increasing transparency and strengthening democracy, can be found.

The current efforts of the Korean Government are aimed at becoming “a small, but efficient government” in response to citizens’ demands that it deliver services more effectively, and in so doing reinforce fundamental democratic values. A number of laws have been passed whose main objective is to uphold citizens’ “right to know” and to encourage citizen participation in the administrative process. The ultimate goal is to ensure justice, transparency, and confidence in governance. These include: the Administrative Procedure Act, which emphasises listening to citizens’ opinion prior to taking administrative decisions; the Act on Disclosure of Information by Public Agencies to ensure citizen access to information and to promote its dissemination – this law describes agencies’ duties concerning information disclosure, the information disclosure process, and disputes procedures; the Act on the Protection of Personal Information Maintained by Public Agencies regulates the protection of personal information maintained by public agencies; finally, other specific acts – including the Digital Signature Act as well as the Act on Promotion of Utilisation of Information System and on Protection of Information – have been adopted to support the use of new information technology in strengthening government-citizen relations.

The case study analyses the Seoul City “On-line Procedures Enhancement for civil application (OPEN)” a system which was developed to achieve transparency in the city’s administration by preventing unnecessary delays, and arbitrary decisions, and to prevent corruption. Among many of the civil transactions, this web-based system allows citizens to monitor applications for permits or approvals where corruption is most likely to occur and to raise questions in the event any irregularities are detected. OPEN has also had an impact on Seoul City’s policy-making process. Previously most policy decisions were made by a few bureaucrats acting in isolation which left room for distortions in policy-making. Now, owing to citizens’ participation and the introduction of OPEN, the policy-making process is becoming transparent.

As it is progressively introduced into all local governments and central government OPEN is expected, after some time, to lead to significant changes in the culture and behaviour of government officials in Korea.

The case study was submitted to the Secretariat in 2001 and covers events up to that date.

Introduction

The use of new information and communication technologies (ICTs) in Korea has grown rapidly since the 1990s. Yearly growth rates of Internet diffusion, cellular phone subscriptions, and personal computer diffusion are 43 per cent, 103 per cent, and 22 per cent, respectively.⁴⁸ Relations between government and citizens in Korea have undergone great changes with the development of information technologies. During the 1960s and 1970s, Korea's fast economic growth was against the backdrop of a government-driven society. Most of the general public was excluded from the policy-making process. In contrast, nowadays the Korean Government is facing a new problem. An explosion of public participation in the policy-making process has become a new issue, raising unexpected problems including policy delays, and continuous disputes among interest groups.

The Information Revolution wave has had a significant impact upon the public administration in Korea. Every civil servant now has his or her own PC and e-mail address, while three-quarters of the Central Government administrations have appointed their own Chief Information Officer (CIO), and the use of electronic approvals⁴⁹ within the central government administrations amounts to half of all such transactions. All central government ministries and agencies as well as local governments have web pages, although their quality and contents differ widely. By connecting to these home pages, citizens and stakeholders can access public information more easily and efficiently.

The Korean Government is trying to utilise information and communication technologies (ICTs), not only to obtain high efficiency in administration but also to strengthen citizen-government connections. Dialogue rooms⁵⁰ on some central government Internet home pages provide important windows for citizen-government interaction. The field of ICTs is one example in which promising practices can be found, these include key factors and conditions contributing to transparency and democracy.

The Seoul Metropolitan Government offers several outstanding practices in strengthening citizen-government connections through the use of ICTs. Seoul operates an On-line Procedures Enhancement (OPEN) system to deal with civil applications (e.g. licensing and permits). The whole process – from the submission of an application to the decision itself – is conducted in full public view as citizens can obtain full information about the decision process via the Internet. This system enhances accessibility to administrative information by providing information on civil applications 24 hours a day via the Internet. It promotes transparency in administrative procedures and eliminates the possibility of corruption through direct public scrutiny and supervision. With increasing use of the Internet, these effects will be further reinforced.

OPEN began locally but was designated by the central government as an advanced tool to foster innovative management in the public sector in November 1999. The outcomes of OPEN have proved satisfying for citizens as well as public officers. To date, all local governments have introduced this system in the period 1999 to 2000, while some central government units intend to introduce this system under current plans to construct an e-government in Korea.

Purpose

This case study contributes to the work undertaken by the PUMA Working Group on “Strengthening Government-Citizen Connections”. The overall objective of this work is to support government efforts to strengthen public participation, transparency, democratic accountability, and policy effectiveness through a comparative analysis of policy and practice in OECD Member countries – including the use of new tools such as ICTs.

The purpose of this report is to focus on how the government of Korea tries to inform, consult with, and engage citizens using ICTs. It consists of three main parts:

- An overview of the general context for e-government in Korea.
- A case study of the OPEN system as applied in Seoul City.
- A brief presentation of new initiatives, including the G4C (Government for Citizen) project.

This report is written based on government materials, reports from research institutes and interviews with officers and staff in charge of e-government and/or relations with citizens.

Background of the Korean Political System

For a generation, the Republic of Korea was an outstanding example of state-led economic development. Its proponents cited it as proof that a modernizing military regime could create popular satisfaction through rapid economic growth (Rose, 1999, pp. 22-23). But the side-effect of state-led economic development has been to place obstacles on the path of democracy, for example in citizens' exclusion from the policy-making process. The place to start was with the presidency, an office that held too much power for the country's good. Although a cabinet existed, the president could rule practically alone if he decided to.

Since the introduction of free elections in 1987, Korea has been a rare Asian example of a new democracy. In 1992, Kim Young Sam became the first civilian president in more than three decades. In December of 1997 Kim Dae Jung became the first opposition party candidate to be elected president.

The basic role and mission of the bureaucracy in Korea is today being altered by the development of the political system. Government must now find a way of shifting from its traditional focus on the twin goals of economic development and national security to find new roles more suited to public administration under a democracy.

Nowadays, citizens' groups and other non-governmental organisations are demanding that the electoral process and political institutions become more transparent and accountable, and that they downsize and decentralise (Shim, 1999, pp. 15-16). According to citizens' demands, the Korean Government should change its structure and personnel policies in order to deliver services effectively, but in doing so it must ensure that it also reinforces fundamental democratic values. The current efforts of the Korean Government are aimed at becoming "a small, but efficient government". The public sector reform programmes implemented under the Kim Dae Jung Government have aimed to meet these demands through restructuring of organisation and personnel, and changes in the culture and mindsets of public sector employees.

Citizens had demanded easier access to public information and an opportunity to participate in decision-making from the late 1980s. Responding to this demand, the Korean Government announced plans to construct an "electronic government". The goal of constructing an e-government focuses on better services for citizens and business, and a more effective use of the Government's information resources. E-government has several guiding principles, which in the United Kingdom have been defined as: building services around citizens' choices; making government and its services more accessible; social inclusion; better use of information (UK Cabinet Office, 2000). The ultimate goal of constructing an e-government in Korea, as elsewhere, is to improve citizens' satisfaction and the efficiency of the public policy-making process.

Framework for Government-Citizen Relations

Legal Framework

Four major laws have been adopted which establish the legal framework for government-citizen relations, while a law on e-government law was most recently adopted on 28 February 2001.⁵¹ The laws in question are: the Act on Disclosure of Information by Public Agencies; the Administrative Procedure Act; Basic Act on Promoting Computerisation; and the Act on the Protection of Personal Information maintained by Public Agencies. The main objective of these laws is to uphold citizens' "right to know" and to encourage citizen participation in the administrative process. The ultimate goal of all these laws are to ensure justice, transparency, and confidence in government:

- *Act on Disclosure of Information by Public Agencies (31 December 1996)*: aims to ensure citizen access to information and to promote its dissemination. The Act describes agencies' duties concerning information disclosure, the information disclosure process, and dispute procedures.

- *Administrative Procedure Act (31 December 1996)*: this law emphasises listening to citizens' opinion prior to taking administrative decisions and ensures that the administration better understands and responds to citizens' demands.
- *Act on the Protection of Personal Information maintained by Public Agencies (31 December 1996)*: established provisions for ensuring privacy of personal information for which the administration does not have the authority to make public.
- *Basic Act on Promoting Computerisation (4 August 1995)*: aims to support the use of new information and communication technologies (ICTs) to strengthen government-citizen relations. The mandate of the National Computerisation Agency is based on this law.
- *Act on Electronic Government (28 February 2001)*: promotes the introduction of new ICTs throughout government as well as the legislature, and administrative and judicial agencies. This law includes a total redesign of the current document management system of approval, distribution and maintenance, and the redesign of administrative tasks for efficient internal administration for the establishment of a paperless administration. The government can also use electronic documents and authentication in its administrative processes.

 Table 23. **Main laws on government-citizen relations and on e-government**

Law	Objective	Target group
Act on Disclosure of Information by Public Agencies	Transparency	Individual citizens
Administrative Procedure Act	Participation	Individual citizens, interest groups
Act on the Protection of Personal Information Maintained by Public Agencies	Privacy	Individual citizens
Basic Act on Promoting Computerisation	Information infrastructure	Society
Act on Electronic Government	Operating system for e-government	Government

Institutional Framework

In Korea, there are several public bodies and figures with responsibility for e-government projects, including:

- *The Government Computer Center (GCC)* in the Ministry of Government Administration and Home Affairs (MOGAHA) manages the computer network, computerises administrative office procedures, fosters government-wide use of public information and computer facilities, provides information technology to government agencies, and disseminates administrative information to the public.⁵²
- *The Ministry of Information and Communication (MIC)* is in charge of developing an integrated and systematic policy to facilitate the information society and to develop the information and communication technology (ICT) industry.
- *The Ministry of Planning and Budget (MPB)* contributes to building e-government by way of restructuring and financial support to ministries.
- *A Chief Information Officer (CIO)* within each central government body, charged with encouraging government officials to identify new ways of working in partnership with the private sector.

The Commission for National Computerisation was established in April 1996 under the vice president. A working team was established in the Ministry of Information and Communication. The commission has focused mainly on infrastructure issues, such as an information superhighway. But partnership and co-operation with other related ministries has been limited and there is a need for better leadership by the Ministry of Information and Communication.

In February 2001, a subcommittee for electronic government was established under the Presidential Commission on Government Innovation.⁵³ This sub-committee for e-government aims at policy co-ordination and intergovernmental partnership in achieving public administration informatisation. The function of the committee is to establish strategies for constructing an e-government – that is, to mediate in conflicts among related ministries, to evaluate the result of implementing informatisation programmes, and to make alternative plans for government innovation by ICTs. The members of the committee are external experts as well as the vice-ministers of the key ministries: Ministry of Planning and Budgeting, Ministry of Information and Communication, Ministry of Government Administration and Home Affairs, Ministry of Education.

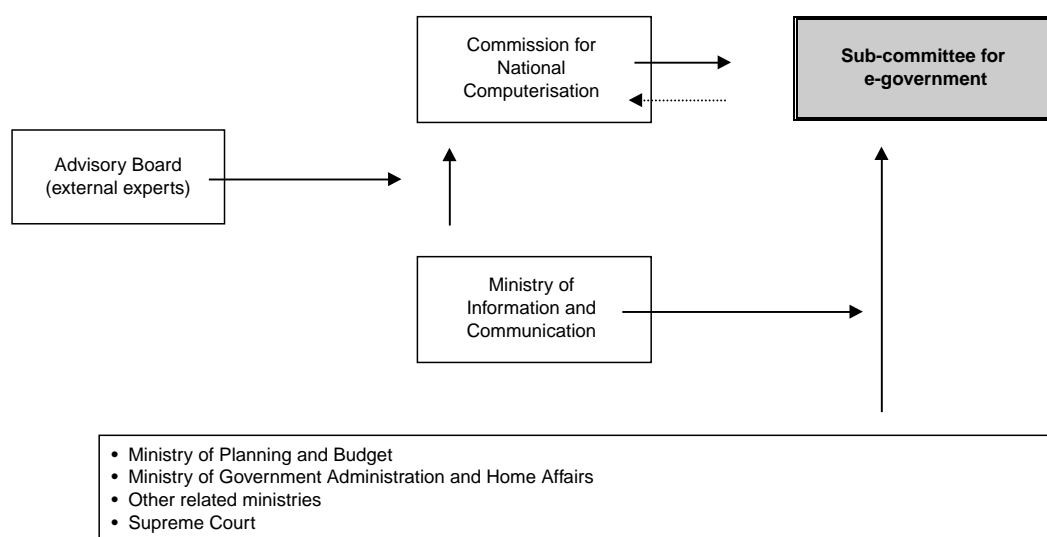
The subcommittee for an electronic government held its first conference on 19 March 2001, at which evaluation and monitoring of major businesses for an electronic government were discussed. The results of this evaluation will be related to budget investment. Progress on e-government will regularly be reported to the president.

Table 24. **Budget for civil administration and e-government in Korea (2000-2001) (in USD)**

	2000	2001
e-government	207 833 000	307 333 000
civil affairs administration	78 333 000	110 750 000

Source: Korean Ministry of Planning and Budget press release (12 August 2000).

Figure 8. **Implementing system for e-government in Korea**



Overview of the Case Study

Background to the OPEN system

The first step on the road to application at the national level for the On-line Procedures Enhancement for civil application (OPEN) – developed by the Seoul Metropolitan Government – came with its selection as “Best Practice” in a cabinet meeting of November 1999. After that, the Ministry of

Planning and Budget (MPB) and the Ministry of Government Administration and Home Affairs (MOGAHA) decided to proceed with the diffusion of the OPEN system. MOGAHA undertook the central development of a unitary software system in the period of January-May 2000, which allowed individual agencies to save budget resources. In 1999, 20 pilot local governments had introduced this system and by 2000, all 208 local governments had done so. Some central government units handling many civil applications will introduce the OPEN system in 2001.

OPEN was developed to prevent corruption in those administrative procedures that handle citizens' applications for municipal permits, licenses and other documents. The background to the OPEN system are administrative practices that are vulnerable to corruption, including the "Kwan-si (acquaintanceship) culture" which may be found in oriental societies and which obstruct the consolidation of democracy and the rule of law in Korea. OPEN was developed to achieve transparency in the city's administration by preventing unnecessary delays, arbitrary decisions, or the payment of "express fees". This Internet-based system allows citizens to monitor progress in the processing of their applications for permits or approvals in areas where corruption is most likely to occur – and allows them to raise questions in the event any irregularities are detected.

General features

Launch: The OPEN system started operations on 15 April 1999, with 26 of the main fields in which applications are received. After one year of operation and technical modifications of the system (on 2 March 2000), 15 additional fields with the potential for irregularities were included in the OPEN system and their application processes made public. These included: 4 industry- and economy-related areas, 5 transportation-related areas, and 6 environment-related areas. From July 2000, more government functions were made public, including 20 more civil affairs functions related to citizens' daily lives in areas such as sanitation, welfare construction, housing, urban planning, and fire emergency services. All civil application documents now show the name of the public official in charge, their telephone number and e-mail address so that citizens who wish to monitor the processing of their applications are able to contact the responsible official directly via the Internet.

Box 46. Fields of Operation Covered by the OPEN System

- *Transportation:* assessment of influences on traffic, adjustment of taxi fares, instalment and adjustment of village shuttle bus routes, settlement of city bus routes, and approval of express bus and inter-city bus terminal operations.
- *Housing & Construction:* housing construction business, approval and deliberation of construction projects, housing redevelopment projects, and city centre redevelopment projects.
- *Environment:* purchase of land for parks, waste disposal business, and approval and agency contracts.
- *Urban Planning:* approval of acts that will affect topography and soil, and decisions and changes in urban development plans.
- *Construction Work:* compensation, facility construction, changes to facility construction plans, construction technology services, and annual cost contract for facility maintenance.
- *Industry & Economy:* adjustment of city gas consumer rates, registration of opening and change of large-scale shops, and financial assistance to small and medium-sized enterprises.
- *Sanitation & Welfare:* contract for social welfare facilities, and approval and sanctions of entertainment establishments & song bars.
- *Fire Emergency Services:* inspection on completion of fire stations.
- *Miscellaneous:* payment of logistics and construction charges, and inspection of compulsory installation of art objects in buildings.

Management: The system was designed to enable staff in charge of application permits to operate it with ease and convenience:

- **Data confirmation** by computer programme or manually: new input data is confirmed every day and the department inputting that data is notified in order to correct or improve them. A computer program checks automatically whether the input of data is delayed or not. The system management is usually checked. A team is organised to check the system management. It confirms whether or not there is any omission or delay in the input of data, and ascertains if the data is exact, so measures can be taken to correct them.
- **Cyber-inspection** is made through the Internet. First, a screen-inspection is conducted with regard to the data documents at the “Internet Opening Room for Civil Appeal”. Then anything doubtful is reviewed by comparing the documents with the actual state of work, which enables an effective inspection of the work under way. In 2000, inspections resulted in a total of 42 irregularities detected, which led to 1 disciplinary punishment, 9 warnings, and 32 corrections.
- **Prizes** are awarded to public officials who best input data (84 prizes in 2000) and it is planned to introduce prizes for those who visit the OPEN system.
- **Advertising** is carried out to encourage citizens to use the OPEN system, through leaflets, stickers, posters, subway train advertisements, electronic signs, guides on how to use the system (available in each district office), newspaper and broadcasting media.

Resources: when it was launched on 1 February 1999, the OPEN Development Team consisted of 3 persons specialised in policy analysis and 9 programme developers. In order to prevent corruption, the Seoul City Audit and Inspection Office is in charge of operating the OPEN system, supported by a Task Force team. Today, a total of 5 000 employees in 485 city departments dealing with applications have been trained to operate the system, input and change data. Following their training, IDs and passwords are assigned to allow each individual trainee to make entries at his or her department.

Reviewing the benefits and limits of the OPEN system

OPEN will greatly serve to prevent arbitrary decisions and delays in administrative service process, thereby strengthening government-citizen connections and preventing corruption. The four main features of OPEN can be summarised as follows:

- *Strengthening government-citizen connections:* opening up the internal administrative processes can prevent public officials’ misuse of their powers of discretion and enhance the transparency of the administration. Citizens and the administration become closer by means of quicker connections via Internet. Positive and specific access to information on administrative procedures in “real time” can satisfy the citizen’s “right to know”.
- *Citizen-oriented administration:* citizens can submit civil applications and scrutinise the entire application process via the Internet whenever they want and wherever they are.
- *Securing transparency:* OPEN offers full information about the handling of civil applications. No official can sit on any case without justifiable reasons or make arbitrary decisions.
- *Preventing corruption:* free access to information on the administrative service process eliminates the need for personal contact with officials and the paying of “express fees”.

Despite the many benefits, a number of limits must be overcome when expanding the application of the OPEN system from the local level to national level:

- *Secrecy* requirements for certain types of information are a major impediment to citizens’ easy access to public information. Considering the existence of Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, disclosure of public information could be restricted for reasons of national security.
- *Traditional attitudes* which put public officials above ordinary citizens are still a serious obstacle to the success of such innovative practices.

Figure 9. Example of OPEN on-line progress report for building permits and inspections

After a review of application, an occupancy approval is issued. Below is the description of this progress, including the current processing status. Project Name: Enlargement of Business and Neighbourhood Facility (165, Nonhyon-dong)			
Title	Occupancy Approval		
Location	165, Nohyon-dong, Kangnam-gu		
Transaction procedures	Building Permit Application	Completed (12/07/1999)	
	Building Permit	Completed (12/16/1999)	
	Construction Beginning Notification	Completed (01/25/2000)	
	Occupancy Approval Application	Completed (02/12/2000)	
	Occupancy Approval	Completed (02/12/2000)	
Transaction status	Staff in Charge(02/12/2000); Junior Official(02/16/2000); Director of Architecture Division(02/16/2000)		
Description	Occupancy Approval 1. Date of approval: 16 February 2000 2. Object of approval: Same as specified in application 3. Further requirements <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • According to the Building Code, Article 26, property owners are required to maintain the property, as specified in a building permit and an occupancy approval. • Property owners are responsible for paying Acquisition Tax at the tax division in the district office within 30 days after an occupancy approval is issued. • Property owners should pay Registration Tax at the tax division in the District office before applying for a structure registration. • Property owners are required to apply for a structure registration at the District's registry within 60 days after an occupancy approval is issued. 		
Place for reference	Architecture Division		
Department	Architecture Division, Kangnam-gu Office	E-mail	[e-mail address]
Staff in charge	[Name, Surname]	Telephone	02-530-1390
Date of entry	02/16/2000	Last modified	02/16/2000 16:58:52

- *Other difficulties*, such as insufficient human resources to operate the information system, laws aiming to strengthen citizen-government connections that are too ambiguous, and an underdeveloped mindset for adopting such new ICT tools.

Measuring citizens' satisfaction

As of 20 January 2001, there have been 1.3 million visitors to the Internet Opening Room while 62 000 cases of business registration, 338 000 cases of document registration, and 1 898 000 cases of document reference have been conducted. Citizens' use of the system has increased from an average of 1 000 visitors a day at the beginning to 25 000 registered recently.

On-line survey of citizens: this was posted on the citizens' opinion section of the Opening Room for Civil Appeals and attracted a total of 1 245 visitors who left their suggestions. The majority of these responded positively to the following questions:

- *Do you think that the Opening Room for Civil Appeals contributes to the clarification of the civil administration?* Of 1 167 respondents, there were 984 (84.3 per cent) affirmative answers and 183 (15.7 per cent) negative ones.
- *Are you satisfied with the handling of civil appeals by the staff in charge?* Among the 1 055 respondents, the majority (762) gave positive answers (72.3 per cent) and 293 (27.7 per cent) gave negative ones.

Korean Gallup survey: a questionnaire developed by the Korean Gallup research service was applied between 20 November and 13 December 2000 to 11 525 citizens who had had contact, in the

previous year, with staff handling civil appeals in 7 fields of public welfare in city hall and the district offices. An average of 49 per cent of respondents reported that inappropriate behaviour on the part of staff in charge had decreased with respect to the year before.

Table 25. **Decline of citizens' reports of inappropriate behaviour by staff with respect to the previous year (%)**

Fields	House construction	Construction work	Fire fighting	Sanitation	Tax	Traffic administration
% decline	55	52.1	52.5	44.4	40.8	49.2

Promising Directions

As the experience from the OPEN case shows, the introduction of ICT into the public sector has generated some positive effects such as transparency, efficiency, credibility and support to the consolidation of democracy.

OPEN was the first case in the "Best Practice Briefing" on 2 November 1999. The best practice of the public sector reform is reported at cabinet meetings twice a week. This programme provides incentives for reform and promotes benchmarking among government units.

After the best practice briefing, the Korean Government has accelerated work on a number of projects to construct e-government and benefit from ICTs:

- *Single Window for Civil Applications*: the project focuses on linking various departments and promoting the development of fully integrated Internet-based services for citizens.
- *Project for Computerisation in Local Public Administration*: the Korean Government launched this project in 1997 to raise productivity and the quality of service by means of information technology. To implement the project, a fundamental plan was made in 1997, with USD 125 million being earmarked for investment between 1998 and 2002. In the first stage of this project, 10 fields concerning the everyday lives of citizens, such as citizen ID cards and land registers, were computerised. In the second stage of the project, the Ministry of Government Administration and Home Affairs (MOGAHA) plans to construct a one-stop Internet service system by means of developing an electronic signature certification system. On completion of the project in 2002, citizens will be able to access public administration services without visiting public offices.
- *Introduction of G4C (Government for Citizen)*: the project establishing a "People-Oriented Civil Service Innovation Plan", referred to as the "G4C Project", is designed to contribute to the realisation of a "Small but Efficient e-Korea". It starts from the observation that people feel uncomfortable with complicated procedures, lengthy processing times, and multiple submission of documents. In addition, people find that they may have to visit the same government agency several times, register repeatedly for the same matter or visit several agencies to obtain certified documents for a given administrative procedure – all without the support of an information counter for administrative procedures and processing standards. The lack of information exchange between agencies or sectors and co-ordination between related laws and regulations also causes serious waste of budget resources and reduces the efficiency of the administration. To resolve such problems, it was decided to redesign the procedures used by the administration and establish the Information Strategic Plan to build up an Information Sharing System for key information used frequently.

The "G4C" project is jointly promoted by the Ministry of Planning and Budget, the Ministry of Government Administration and Home Affairs, the Ministry of Information and Telecommunication, the Ministry of Construction and Transportation and the Supreme Court. The project aims to achieve administrative innovation using information technology, and the government expects it to significantly enhance the efficiency and productivity of the administration in providing swift, high-quality administrative services to citizens. The G4C project, whose planning phase was carried out from October 2000 to April 2001, has four main targets, namely to:

- Establish the administration system as a top-class business model capable of responding quickly to changes in the international business environment and to cope with possible crises in the future.
- Build a basic model and infrastructure for key information sharing as well as set up an organisation and administrative base for the expansion of information sharing.
- Establish a government representative for e-service (single window), that can expand and execute plans and unify all service counters.
- Plan for the introduction of the laws and regulations required for the implementation of these new administrative procedures and standards (including identification, e-signatures, certification and fees).

Conclusions

In its initial stages, government computerisation in Korea focused on suppliers and hardware – such as supplying every civil servant with a personal computer and constructing a network. The National Key Electronic Infrastructure project was a major effort during the period from 1987-96 and included the:

- Establishment of a database with the main administrative information, such as citizen registration, real estate, and vehicles.
- Development of a basic ICT environment for the government, such as a computer and communication network.
- Establishment of a national network through a high-speed information network project (1995).

The Computerisation Project has had positive effects on the construction of an ICT infrastructure, but the project has not been without its critics who note:

- Insufficient use of computerisation to conduct innovation in government.
- Limited impact due to the introduction of ICTs without redesigning tasks.
- Weak synergy effects throughout the whole government due to isolated initiatives.

As reviewed in the case study on the OPEN system, ICTs have dramatically affected the practice of government. The development of ICT has resulted in greater efficiency in government and in strengthening government-citizen connections by ensuring transparency, openness and participation via the Internet. ICTs have also helped to fundamentally change the context of government. We are moving from a world of independent governments to one of a web of governance.

OPEN has been progressively introduced in all local governments during 2000 and will also be disseminated at the level of central government. After some time, we can expect the culture and behaviour of government in Korea to change dramatically. The OPEN system has already had an impact on Seoul City's policy-making process. Previously, policy-making was generally conducted by a few public officials in isolation with little public input, leaving room for distortions. Now, owing to citizens' participation and the introduction of OPEN, the decision-making process is becoming more transparent. The benefits of OPEN affect all policy fields to a greater or lesser extent. Generally speaking, information and communication technologies, more than any other tool or non-governmental organisation (NGO), enables citizens to participate more actively in the decision-making process.

There are various opinions regarding the current e-government implementation system within Korea. Some criticise the separation of responsibility for building the e-government system which results in weakened intergovernmental co-operation and partnership, business delays, and duplication in investments (Kim, 2000). Others underline the need for an e-government implementation system which covers both central and local governments, as well as the legislature.

Several obstacles lie in the path of the future development of e-government in Korea. First, rapid development of technology is deepening the information gap and digital divide. The older generation and citizens in rural areas are relative losers, and they will need government investment and education. Second, government lacks sufficient manpower with expertise in ICTs. Overcoming this obstacle will

require training for young people in the use of information technologies. Education not only addresses the shortage of ICT experts but also serves to change old mindsets and overcome negative historical legacies. Third, stricter criteria for secrecy will be recommended according to which information should be classified as secret.

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