

Public Sector Information Management in East and Southern Africa: Implications for Democracy and Governance

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ABSTRACT

This paper sets out to explore the nexus between public sector information management (including knowledge management and records management) on the one hand and democracy, governance and development on the other. Given the impetus worldwide to embrace democratization, good governance and development, governments in East and Southern Africa have not been left behind. Yet as efforts are made to tackle these issues, one critical factor that is yet to receive adequate attention is the role played by public sector information management and in particular knowledge and records management in underpinning efficiency, effectiveness, transparency, accountability and integrity in public sector management. Effective management and exploitation of information not only serves as the engine of growth in any country but is also the means by which governments can demonstrate accountability and transparency in the use of public resources, expose corruption and fraud, improve financial management and reporting, protect citizens' rights, as well as improve service delivery. Even as the linkage between information management and good governance may seem obvious, the fact is that presently very few governments around the world acknowledge the importance of information and its contribution to governance and

development let alone the commitment to harness it as a tool for effective governance. As governments in East and Southern Africa strive to embrace e-government systems, efforts must be made to address national and institutional weaknesses that may stand in the way of realizing the tenets of good governance, democratization and development. These include absence of ICT and other information management infrastructure, low levels of ICT penetration, low digital literacy and technical skills, and lack of sustainable funding among others. The author argues that proper information management and the availability of records as evidence is the *sine qua non* of democratic governance. Therefore, countries in East and Southern Africa need to provide more investment in this sector as a way of advancing and deepening democracy, governance and development.

Keywords: *Governance, e-Government, Information Management, Public Sector, Public Sector Reform, Democratization, Development, East Africa, Southern Africa.*