

**The Fourth Session of the Web for Development Conference
Nairobi, Kenya, November 28-30, 2007**

Title of Workshop: CHOICE, a web-based solution for providing Government services

Date, Time and Location: 29 November 2007, **9.30-10.15 am**

Venue: CR1

Number of Participants: 15

Panelist/Speaker	<p>Mr. Aman Kumar Singh, Joint Secretary, Information Technology and Biotechnology, Government of Chhattisgarh and CEO of CHIPS (Chhattisgarh Infotech and Biotech Promotion Society)</p> <p>www.chips.gov.in www.choice.gov.in</p>
Rapporteur	Raf Tuts, UN-HABITAT
Outline of case study	<p>CHOICE, a web-based solution for providing Government services</p> <p>Chhattisgarh, one of the youngest Indian States with a population of 21 million and with low per capita income, low life expectancy and high infant mortality rates is the first State to develop a comprehensive e-governance system with the aim to complement the delivery system of the Government services.</p> <p>The State of Chhattisgarh recognizes the importance of Information and Communication Technology as a key enabler in its economic development and improving the quality of life. It seeks to provide all citizens widespread and easy access to government services, in the local language effectively addressing the existing digital divide and promoting entrepreneurs.</p> <p>The State created the Chhattisgarh infotech and biotech Promotion Society (CHIPS) as a nodal agent in Information Technology and Biotechnology. CHOICE is the comprehensive e-governance system developed by CHIPS for the State of Chhattisgarh. The objectives of CHOICE are to provide one stop solution for all G2C services; to provide government services with care, courtesy, efficiency, transparency; to develop a robust system, which is scalable and extensible; and to automate the back end operations of government.</p> <p>CHOICE provides around 20 Government-to-Citizen “G2C” web based Services, which are offered with the help of choice centers run by private persons who have been notified as public servants.</p> <p>The bouquet of Services offered is very rich and includes Birth/Death Certificate; Local Resident Certificate; Income Certificate; Public Grievance; Payment of Electricity Bill; Payment of Property Tax ; Mutation of Property; and Building Construction Permission. Services soon to be added include Land Records including maps and mutation information; Education; Telemedicine; and Agriculture Information</p> <p>CHOICE has curtailed the waiting time for certain documents from 15-20 days to 1-2 days. In addition, it has resulted in a definite reduction in corruption, improved the efficiency and efficacy of Government Officers, and increase in transparency and accountability of the government.</p>

	<p>CHOICE is underpinned by a capacity building programme for internal and external stakeholders. Training for political representatives in leadership and change management was critical in making CHOICE a success. However, also training for all levels of Government employees is indispensable.</p> <p>CHOICE has multiple linkages with Millennium Development Goals, including health, agriculture, land tenure, and education. In addition, the Public Private Partnership model behind CHOICE generates significant employment in the private sector.</p>
Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ E-governance needs different approaches in urban and rural areas. The business model of CHOICE, which works well in urban areas is not applicable to rural areas. ▪ High levels of attrition in CHiPS: it is difficult to find and maintain qualified people to manage the CHOICE system as Government salaries are not competitive with private sector. ▪ Corruption related to contact between citizens and government officials has been significantly reduced, but it is not fully removed. Measures have been taken to further reduce possibility of corruption, for instance through the “first in first out” principle. ▪ It is prudent to adopt a pragmatic approach to Open Source Software: use it whenever possible, but be ready to complement with proprietary software when development and maintenance skills are lacking.
Recommendations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Proper legal frameworks are essential for the sustainability of e-governance initiatives ▪ Content and application are equally important; too much emphasis on technology may be counterproductive; it is extremely important to provide contents in the local language. ▪ Think big, start small, and scale fast!