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Promoting Good Governance Using ICTs in Nigeria

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Good governance has emerged as a critical factor in assessing public managers all over the world. Using information communication and technologies (ICTs) to promote good governance, therefore, has become a veritable tool to boost social economic development in Nigeria. The purpose of this paper is to interrogate how ICTs can be used to promote good governance in Nigeria. The study adopted qualitative research technique. Data were collected from secondary sources, such as extant literature, journals, textbooks, internet and newspapers. Content-analysis technique was adopted to collect and analyze the data and elicit key concepts. Elicited key concepts were edited, pattern-matched, coded and categorized into themes. Thematic and secondary data analysis methods were adopted to analyze, interpret and answer research questions. Findings show that e-government, e-commerce, e-citizens, and e-employees' participation issues have been tackled by government to promote good governance. However, there were certain challenges, such as: quality infrastructure, lack of stable electricity, lack of internet access, cyber security challenges, capacity building and political will. Despite these challenges, there are opportunities for the government to promote good governance by improving infrastructure, increasing broadband penetration of internet usage, capacity building, and implementing cyber security best practices.

Keywords: *Nigeria, good governance, ICTs, capacity building, efficiency*

The increasing effect of sophisticated Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) across all private and public organizations in Nigeria became wide-spread during the 1980s and 1990s. In twenty-first century, “the use of the internet to enhance interaction with citizens became increasingly widespread and has become a new channel of communication” (Eneanya, 2015, p. 517). Many governments employ ICTs to deliver services to citizens and promote good governance. Good governance is a difficult concept to define, encompassing “fast changing political, social and economic milieu along with the international environment and conditions of operational government” (Sharma et al, 2011, pp. 68-9). Good governance is defined as the “ability of those in leadership positions to manage a nation’s affairs in a popularly acceptable manner by shaping its political, economic and social environment in order to meet the standards set by the society” (Eneanya, 2015, p. 479). Fundamentally, good governance can be viewed as the extent a government is “perceived and accepted as legitimate, committed to rule of law, improving the public welfare and responsive to the needs of its citizens” (Eneanya, 2015, p.479).

To promote good governance, therefore, many governments use Information and Communication (ICTs) connectivity tools such as; email, internet, websites, face-book, twitter and intranet to leverage service delivery to citizens. The aim of using these Information and Communication technologies is to reduce personnel costs, minimize complexities of procedures and processes of doing government business.

According to Prabhu, (2012, p. 2), using online system based on the internet “reduces contact with mediating officials and reduces the possibility of corruption”. This enhances the capacity of the state to “develop needed infrastructure, fosters democratic control over the government’s economic, social and welfare policies by citizens and civil society – a key process requirement for good and responsive governance” (Prabhu, 2012, p. 24).

Information and communication technologies (ICTs) can be used to do tasks done by human being and make decisions. When ICTs tools are aligned with goals of governance, they can help to enhance efficiency and effectiveness in good governance (Sharma, 2010). Governance is strongly rooted to the availability of strategic information and knowledge. Citizens now demand that governments are “wired” to the civil society. Good governance relies on access to information and knowledge about political activities, about service delivery and about policy choices available to citizens. These benefits are desired by responsive democratic governments all over the world, Nigeria inclusive.

The purpose of this article, therefore, is to interrogate how issues and challenges in information and communication technologies (ICTs) can be addressed to promote good governance in Nigeria. Specific objectives for this study include: examining ICTs-based governance issues in Nigeria, identifying challenges and exploring opportunities of ICTs usage to promote good governance in Nigeria.

Research Questions

In the light of these objectives, the study is driven by the following research questions:

- (1) What are the ICTs-based governance issues that have promoted good governance and service delivery to citizens in Nigeria?
- (2) To what extent has the usage of Information and Communication Technologies militated against the promotion of good governance in Nigeria?
- (3) How can opportunities of ICTs-based governance be explored and utilized to promote good governance in Nigeria?

Against this background, the article is structured into four parts. Part one examines the introduction, purpose, and research questions. Part two examines related previous studies, conceptual framework and methodical approach. Part three examines ICTs-based governance issues leveraged in Nigeria to promote good governance. Part four identifies ICTs-based governance challenges in Nigeria. Finally, part five explores ICTs-based governance opportunities that can be utilized to promote good governance.

Review of Related Studies

The concept of governance is difficult to define and controversial in nature. Some scholars view it as essentially concerned with questions of accountability, commitment to the rule of law, efficiency in governance and effectiveness. Sharma, (2010, p. 2) defined it as “broader political concerns relating to democracy, human rights and participation”. So, governance means different things to different people. It involves interaction between citizens and the formal institutions. Governance, therefore, broader than concepts like the state, government, regime and good government. Good governance encourages participatory democracy, transparent and accountable leadership regarding the allocation of resources. According to World Bank Report (2007), good governance means a predictable, transparent and enlightened public policy and

professional bureaucrats governed by the rule of law, accountability and a participative civil society.

On the other hand, Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) are electronic device utilized by governments for public service delivery. They comprise the following: Wide Area Networks, Twitter, Face-Book, E-mail, the internet, and Mobile computing applications that can connect with citizens, businesses and other arms of government (Sharma, 2010). These technologies access information that help to promote service delivery to citizens, improve interaction with business and industry. The benefits of using ICTs tools are: reduction in corruption, build state capacity, reduce cost of governance, and deepen accountability and transparency (Sharma, 2010). However, electronic governance (e-governance) can be operated by “three elements-open data, online service and e-participation” (Bekkers & Homburg, 2007, pp. 373-382). According to Roberts (2006), internet and related ICTs have greatly reduced the cost of collecting, distributing and accessing government information. The tools have also been used to access information, deliver services to citizens efficiently, and promote accountability and transparency (Anderson, 2009; Cullier & Piotrowski, 2009, Fuchs, 2006; von Waldenberg, 2004).

Besides, the tools also offer means of engaging citizens and participating directly into e-government initiatives (Axelsson et. al., 2010; Hughes, 2011). Furthermore, study by Heeks (2005) on the effect of the use of ICTs to promote good governance revealed that it can improve government processes (e-administration), connect citizens (e-citizens and services) and build external interactions (e-society).

Conceptual Framework and Methodical Approach

Electronic governance, in this context, therefore, means using electronic tools to implement government activities for the benefits of the citizens. It is a “terrain – the public sector – as well as the institutions, people and processes that operate within that terrain. Electronic–governance is about how that terrain operates, and how it gains and maintains legitimacy” (Sharma, 2010, p. 19).

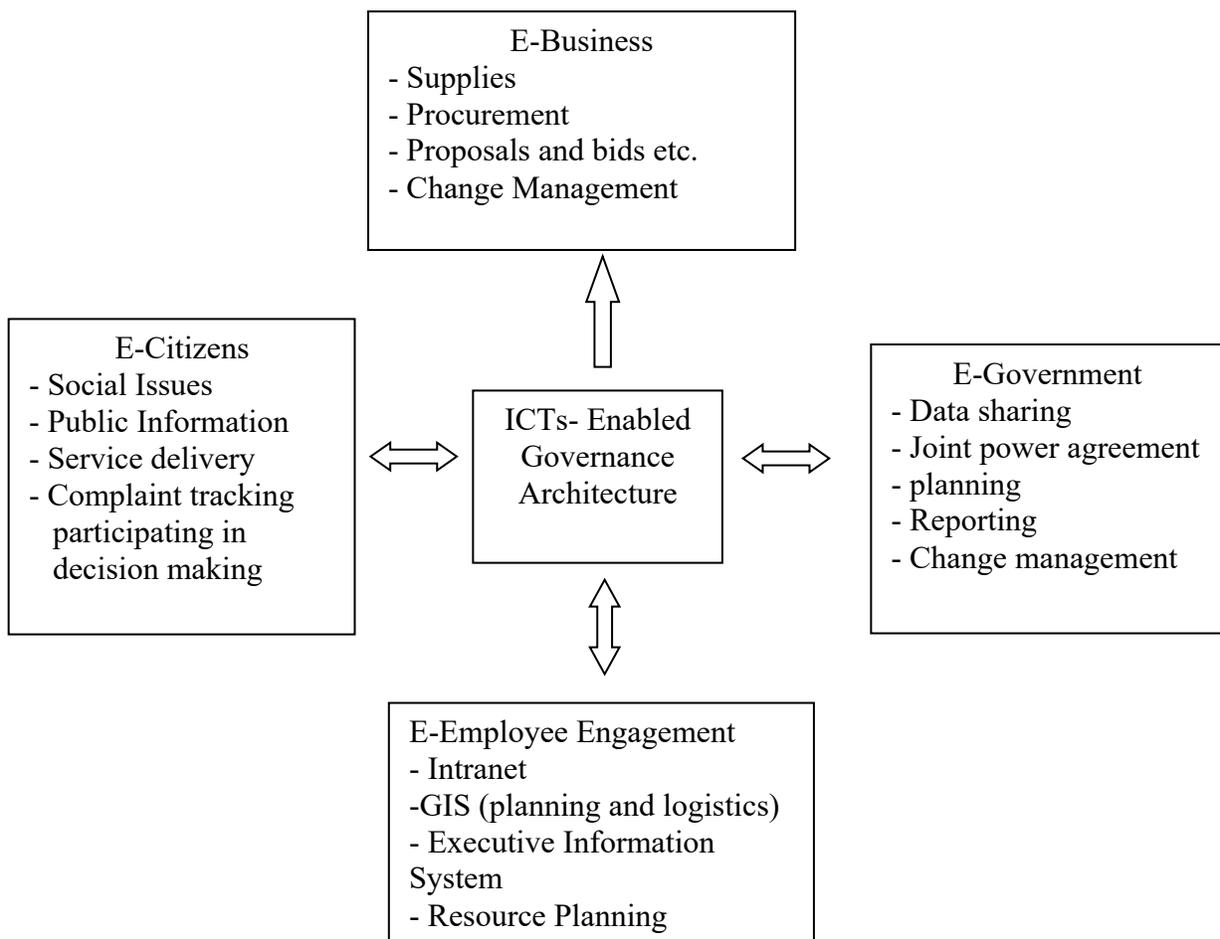
The analysis would, therefore, adapt ICTs-based governance key concepts as conceptual framework of analysis. They include: business (e-business), citizens participation (e-citizens), inter-government (e-government) and employee engagement (e-employees). The conceptual framework and its components are illustrated as in Figure 1.

Using ICTs in this context to promote governance would enable government to harness the internet, support governance and provide service delivery to business, citizens, inter-government and employees. These key concepts are operationally defined as demonstrated below:

- Government–to–citizens, (G2C), means government interaction with citizens to access quality government services, resolve social issues, access information, track complaints and participate in decision-making.
- Government – to – Business (G2B) means government leverage with business for supplies, procurement, proposals and contract biddings and using electronic devices to manage mutually beneficial information...

- Government – to – Government (G2G) - Government relates with states and localities in data-sharing, planning, reporting mutual requirements and participate as full partners to render welfare services to citizen.
- Government-to-Employee (G2E)- means government using electronic tools engage employees for resource planning logistics, information system and customer relations management to promote internal efficiency and effectiveness of employees.

Figure 1 Constructed Conceptual Framework for using ICTs to promote good governance and efficient service delivery



The article, therefore, adopted qualitative research to undertake this investigation. Data collection was from secondary sources, such as extant literature, textbooks, journal articles, websites, internet and newspapers. Collected data from these sources were content– analyzed to elicit key concepts and categorized in themes. Key themes were coded and categorized as: e-government, e-business, and e-citizen participation and e-employee engagement. These ICTs-based governance issues or themes were analyzed using thematic and secondary data analysis to interpret and answer research questions. This conceptual framework and methodical approach are justified because examining ICT-based governance in this context paves way for the assessment of state capacity in the use of information and communication technologies to promote good governance and socio-economic development (Prabhu, 2012; Heeks, 2005).

Data Analysis and interpretation of Results

Information communication and technologies-based governance

RQ1. What are the ICTs-based governance issues that promoted good governance and service delivery to citizens in Nigeria?

E-government Issues

E-government can be viewed as a using ICTs tools to manage institutions, people and government activities in the public sector. Only computerization of government work will lead to automation of existing manual work. E-government can be defined as a process of providing public access via the internet to government and transform internal efficiency of government departments (Peters and Pierre, 2007; Curristine, Lonti & Jourmard, 2007). E-government helps government to manage knowledge economy as it affects citizens, employees, other levels of government and businesses. Economic benefits to governments include: cost savings, changing the perception of officials on change management and how they share information between departments or governments, within and between government organizations and businesses in Nigeria.

Many public organizations, Ministries, Extra-ministerial departments and Agencies (MDAs) have their websites for access, usage and exchange of information. Citizens can access these websites for job vacancies, documentation management, online contract bidding, tax payments, tracking of permits, voters' registration, Card reader, licenses application, form submission, online, transfer of funds, procurement, supplies financial transactions and other public service delivery. The development of "web-based technologies is now the central operating tool of public organizations in Nigeria involved in decision-making while accountability has been enhanced" (Eneanya, 2015, p.522). E-government is now used to rethink the role of government as a tool to further economic development and good governance. Online transactions and e-banking have produced significant social and commercial benefits. Local e-payment initiatives have enabled the use of multi-channel payment solutions-cards, Automatic Teller Machines (ATM), POS terminals, Mobile phones, websites, internets, intranets, facebook, twitter and YouTube and so on. The transformation of retail-banking business through ATMs has, however, been the most visible face of e-business in Nigeria.

Electronic-passport (e-passport) system was adopted in Nigeria to simplify and support the delivery of passports to citizens. Same was the electronic-registration or e-registration tool used to simplify and support the registration of National Youths Corps members. The federal government established Bank Verification Number (BVN), card reader for improved electoral

process and Treasury Single Account (TSA). All these have reduced corruption, reduced issues of “ghost workers” and promoted accountability and transparency in Government. State governments have also adopted electronic-enabled governance tools to deliver services to citizens and businesses. For example, Lagos State has automated significant aspects of public sector services, including land management, payroll management, internal revenue collection, education, healthcare service delivery and data management. Cross River and Ekiti states have brought ICTs into the management of investments in businesses, inter-governmental sharing of data, tax policies and payroll (Oketola, 2012). Thus, when “ICTs tools are properly aligned with goals of governance, they can help to create gains in both efficiency and effectiveness of public service delivery” (Sharma 2010, p.49).

Social Issues

ICTs-based governance also plays important role on social issues. ICTs enable Nigerian government to determine the dynamics of social change. This change can be at the level of the administration, politics, social, economic or individuals. It is not simply about drafting laws or issuing orders from political leaders as with government reforms, but social change requires changing how official think and act, how they view their jobs and how they share information between departments. In Nigeria, social media, such as WhatsApp, e-mail, Twitter, Instagram, Face-Book and Mobile Applications are now used by elected officials to engage citizens on government activities, information sharing policy issues and citizens’ relationship management. The Federal Republic of Nigeria established Websites, Face-Book, Twitter and E-mail platforms where government communicates with citizens on public service affairs and social issues. Whistle-blowing policy established by the government to combat corruption, crime and insecurity, among others, has yielded positive results because of the use of ICTs-based governance.

Change Management Issues

The issue of management of change using ICTs tools to enhance organizational and institutional changes has also impacted on governance in Nigeria. It brought about changes in the decision-making procedures, processes, delegation of power, and bridged service delivery chain.

Globalization, climate change, free trade, the increased movements of people and goods, emergency management by public safety officials, and changing social attitude of citizens now make citizens expect more from government. New change management arising from new technologies are contributing to the challenges now being faced by politicians, executives and managers, alike in Nigeria, which have made the use of ICTs imperative. Using ICTs tools for change management has promoted public service officials’ capacities and efficiency.

E-citizens Issues

Using ICTs tools has enhanced government-citizen interface, which is the most critical aspect of good governance. In Nigeria, ICTs tools have enabled leaders create avenues and opportunities for people to participate in the governance processes, such as:

- (i) Participating on democratic issues and agenda debates before any decision is taken on them.
- (ii) Expanding policy debates beyond the confines of dominant individuals and groups, and enriching the stock of policy knowledge in the process.

- (iii) More transparency and accountability on decisions and actions of government.
- (iv) Creation of information for the public
- (v) Creation of strong virtual communities.
- (vi) Tax payments
- (vii) Online polls and voting information.
- (viii) Greater representation of un-represented communities – women, and aged children who are otherwise kept marginalized out of democratic processes (Sharma, 2010, p. 57).

Using ICTs to promote good governance in Nigeria is not about hosting government websites, e-mail, and service delivery over internet or electronic access to information, but how citizens relate with government in terms of needs and responsibilities. Prior to 1999 in Nigeria, the status of ICTs was far below expectation. For example, total fixed telephone lines “were less than 400,000, while regular internet users were less than 200,000” (National ICT Policy, 2012, p. 8). However, Nigeria has moved from “approximately 400,000 available fixed telephone lines pre-1999 to over 90.5 million available mobile telephone lines by the first quarter of 2011, thereby making Nigeria’s telecommunication market the fastest growing in Africa” (National ICT Policy, 2012, p.8). Available statistics on ICT empowerment in Nigeria as of 2011, are:

Table 1 ICTs Integration into Governance Infrastructure

	% of Citizens’ Empowerment
Mobile Penetration (per 100 people)	55.76
Fixed penetration (per 100 people)	0.48
Internet Penetration (per 100 people)	23.48 (2010)
Internet Users (000)	43,270 (2010)
Broadband penetration	6.1% (2010)
PC Penetration (Number of PCs per 100)	4.7 (2010)
Computers Assembled in Nigeria	<500, 000
Number of registered ICT Companies	350
Broadcasting Stations Nationwide	308
Subscribers (2015)	140 million

Source: Adapted from National ICT Policy, 2012, p. 9.

Insight from these data showed why it is imperative for the government to use ICTs in promoting governance, which enabled citizens to communicate with government on quality and efficient public service delivery in Nigeria. Again, utilizing ICTs enabled the government of Nigeria to reach marginalized communities in rural areas and establish new structures for commerce and governance using mobile applications and social media platforms.

E-Employees’ Engagement Issues

The ICTs tools have been utilized as government mechanisms to leverage the expertise of faculty and staff of Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) in decision making. This ICTs setting has assisted government leaders to make timely decisions on major IT strategies and investments. Using ICTs to promote employee engagement in Nigeria has been linked to

performance management and derives such outcomes as: achieving strategic goals through intranet, performance-based budgeting, resource planning, delivery responsive service, stimulating innovation, retaining good employees, boosting attendance and keeping workplaces safe. Improved government performance especially delivery responsive service, boosts the public employees' satisfaction with government. When government employees believe the people they serve trust government, these public servants are likely to have higher level of engagement and satisfaction.

Challenges of using ICTs to promote good governance

RQ.2: To what extent has the usage of Information and Communication Technologies militated against the promotion of good governance in Nigeria?

While many achievements on ICTs-based governance have been recorded in Nigeria, there are still many challenges to be addressed because ICTs as tools of governance are still in their infancy. Among the challenges militating the promotion of good governance in Nigeria are:

(1) Infrastructure Usage

Internet and broadband penetration have been globally acknowledged as the foundation for transformation to knowledge economy. Broadband has the potential of enabling entire new industries and changing how we educate our children, deliver healthcare, manage energy, ensure public safety, engage government, and access, organize and disseminate knowledge. Even though there are some initiatives aimed at deploying broadband in Nigeria, there is need to accelerate ongoing efforts and introduce new initiatives.

(2) Policy, Legal and Regulatory Framework

Nigeria needs ICTs policy, legal and regulatory framework to play important role in the advancement of ICTs infrastructure and impact of government environment. Such framework would enable Nigeria address cybercrime issues, copyrights policies and other legal issues (Sharma, 2010). Lack of political will to address these issues holistically is part of government weaknesses in poor internet connectivity to rural areas.

(3) Universal Access

Many Nigerians reside in the rural areas than urban areas. Those who live in urban areas have access to advanced ICTs services. In addition, some who reside in urban areas are unserved or under-served. There is the need to develop national ICTs infrastructure to encourage universal quality access and service.

(4) Capacity Building

Human capital development in ICTs has become a great challenge in Nigeria. Knowledge-based products and services, such as: software, hardware, networks, and card technologies have become areas of national importance and a challenge.

(5) Local Content Development

Information communication and technologies local contents in soft wares and hard wares are grossly under-developed in Nigeria and a challenge as the country depends on the foreign importation. This has caused serious drain on foreign exchange.

(6) Security

Cybercrime and cybersecurity are now areas of concern for many nations of the world, including Nigeria. ICTs-related Agencies and Security organizations require ICTs infrastructure to fight cybercrime.

(7) Research and Development

Though there are some research and development (R&D) in the general area of science and technology, R&D in the specific area of ICTs is very minimal, or non-existent in Nigeria. There is a need to promote R&D activities to stimulate and sustain innovation in ICTs solutions and internet connectivity for all institutions in private and public sectors (National Policy, 2016)

Opportunities for ICTs as tools to promote good governance

RQ. 3: How can opportunities of ICTs-based governance be explored and utilized to promote good governance in Nigeria?

(1) Broadband Infrastructure

It is widely acknowledged that broadband infrastructure is an enabler for economic and social growth in the digital economy. Therefore, as part of the national universal service obligation, broadband access shall be made universally available to all citizens.

(2) Universal Quality Access

It is globally acknowledged that citizen's access to ICTs networks and services is a desirable national development goal. However, in Nigeria, significant portions of the population are either unserved or underserved. Lack of access has obvious consequences for national development, such as diminished participation in elections and democratic governance. Nigeria should, therefore, follow international best practices to address the challenges through the development of various initiatives as indicated in Vision 20:2020.

(3) ICTs Infrastructure

Globalization makes it compelling for Nigeria to enhance the development of its National ICTs infrastructure to respond effectively to new challenges. Therefore, it is necessary to develop ICTs infrastructure in support of national broadband connectivity and accelerate socio-economic development. Government should accelerate the deployment of fiber optic and wireless backbone infrastructure that ensures high bandwidth availability, universal access through the country.

(4) Legal, Policy and Regulatory Framework

The reality of technological and market convergence implies that existing policies relating to the ICTs sector in Nigeria need a critical review. Most of the objectives in the existing policies have been overtaken by technological advancement and market transformations worldwide. A key requirement is the development of appropriate policies as well as legal and regulatory framework

that foster an enabling environment. Government should, therefore, review and harmonize all existing laws as well as create new ICTs-related laws to promote the growth of the sector.

(5) Local Content Development

Local content for software and hardware are grossly underdeveloped in Nigeria. This has resulted in reliance on foreign software and hardware. Government should ensure that local software and hardware are properly developed through appropriate local content laws, content development in indigenous languages; and encouragement of the industry to focus on solutions and services that meet the needs of the society.

(6) Capacity Building

Government should build the capacity of employees and citizens using ICTs-enabled tools. There is the need to develop appropriate ICTs curricula for all levels of educational institutions at primary, secondary and tertiary levels. Moreover, government should establish information resource centers and strategies for research development and innovation. Government should also promote digital literacy guidelines and standards for the informal sector, non-literate population in the rural areas and special groups. Finally, government should provide training programs for public servants and employees in the private sector.

(7) Socio- Economic Development

ICTs-based governance has enhanced Nigerian economy in different sectors, such as: industrial/manufacturing, education, transportation, tourism, health, banking, commerce, agriculture, government services, defense, sports, and rural development (Ndukwe, 2004). There is good prospect and opportunities for the use of ICTs to promote good governance, facilitate participation, communicate policy and decision-making processes and empower marginalized groups in Nigeria.

Future Research Direction

Future research direction should focus on quantitative and qualitative approaches to validate the results. New developments in information and communication technologies and relevant data beyond the scope of the study should also be incorporated in future research.

Conclusion

The effect of globalization and the urge to use Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) to promote good governance in Nigeria has changed all aspects of national life in Nigeria. Using ICTs to promote good governance is about using ICTs to provide quality and efficient service delivery. It is also about how ICTs-based governance will allow citizens to communicate with government and participate in decision-making. ICTs tools can help government to reduce costs through improved procurement practices, increased competition through tendering and auctions. Using ICTs for good governance will induce great degree of change on how Nigerian government are functioning and form the basis of decision making and action.

Good governance relies on information and knowledge. And recognition of this set of knowledge by the decision makers in the usage of ICTs technologies is what makes ICTs-based governance imperative. Therefore, digitization of this entire set of knowledge helps decision makers in governments, business, and employees' access and make use of the knowledge through data sharing.

Furthermore, in the context of globalization and free trade, the increased movements of people and goods, ICTs have sparked optimism about their potential to accelerate the pace of social and economic development in Nigeria. ICTs tools can be used to meet basic human needs for the poor and marginalized communities in rural and remote areas, and create new structures for commerce.

In Nigeria, ICTs have been adopted in virtually every sector, be it in health, industry, bank, education, oil and gas, politics and governance. This is evidenced in such advances as e-passport biometric, driving license, Bank Verification Number (BVN), Permanent Voter Card, Card Reader, Treasury Single Account (TSA) and so on. Indeed, using ICTs for governance in Nigeria has facilitated cross-industry linkages, efficiency and productivity, making the banking, oil and gas and manufacturing industries so reliant on it for growth.

Despite these impacts, majority of Nigerians still have no access to affordable broadband internet connectivity. The dearth of requisite internet infrastructure, including long distance transmission fiber, metropolitan networks and connectivity necessary for bandwidth distribution means that Nigerians pay more for broadband internet services when compared with their counterparts in other African countries. And economies of Broadband remain out of reach for average Nigerian because the fiber needed to move the bandwidth around is limited and mainly found in some cities and urban centers. Besides, there are challenges of lack of skilled professionals desired to support massive infrastructural deployment. Other challenges for using ICTs for governance include: lack of legal framework, lack of universal access and usage, high operating costs and lack of local content.

Irrespective of these challenges, using ICTs for governance holds a lot of promise in Nigeria. With the right environment and better skills sets, broadband infrastructure access and usage, using ICTs for governance has tremendous opportunities for Nigeria in terms of participating meaningfully in good governance and promoting socio-economic development.

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