

Mapping UNSW Impact Global Development

Primary SDG	9: INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE
Broad theme	eGovernance
Research	Determining and resolving the barriers to the take up of eGovernment services by governments in developing nations
Impact region	Bangladesh, Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia and Pacific Island countries
Faculty	UNSW Canberra
School/Institute	School of Engineering and Information Technology
Academic	Dr Ahmed Imran
Project partners	AusAid: \$500,000 over three years, Bangladesh Ministry of Science and Information Technology, Bangladesh Public Administration Training Centres, Australian Ministry of Finance (AGIMO)
Related SDGs	16: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions

Elevator pitch

Ahmed's research has determined that managers' lack of knowledge is the main barrier to the adoption of digital government services (eGovernance) in developing countries, and that training and education can overcome these barriers to provide a country with efficient, transparent and time saving services.

The Challenge: Developing governments resist change and IT

In Bangladesh, government bureaucracy is largely weighed down by colonial times. The 'bibles' of government practice passed on by the colonisers are still held as gospel and there is resistance to new ideas. Most interactions between government and citizens are by paper and in person. This manual way of operating is susceptible to corruption and transparency issues, and it is also inefficient for both parties.

Government services can be automated using ICT systems, making them more transparent and accountable. An example in Australia is MyGov and e-Tax. Many governments around the world are moving towards using ICT to facilitate the delivery of services, but there are challenges to change. Prior studies have looked at the challenges from a technical perspective, but what else is preventing the Bangladesh Government from taking up ICT service delivery?

Our solution: Determine barriers to change, provide training for long term adaptation

To examine the broad range of challenges, Ahmed surveyed more than 300 public servants in Bangladesh, and he held focus groups and undertook interviews. He discovered a lack of knowledge among middle to senior decision makers was the biggest hurdle rather than a lack of infrastructure. These managers were not across new innovations in the eGovernance sector and were not comfortable with IT. This resulted in a lack of forward planning around service delivery.

Realising a mindset change and training were required, Ahmed teamed up with Shirley Gregor (ANU), Tim Turner, AusAID and the Bangladesh Government to create a strategy and training for government officials. This included a five year strategic pathway for eGovernment adoption in Bangladesh, training workshops for 107 senior and mid-level government officials, and the creation of an ICT Management Handbook. To ensure eGovernance sustainability they designed a Masters-equivalent training course that was included at the Bangladesh Public Administration Training Centre (BPATC). All Bangladesh government officials must attend this Centre for training. More than 100 officers and educators were trained in the three years of the project (2010-13), and the course continues to be offered. Course material is designed for non-IT people, promoting the use of IT and how to be a good user and manager of IT services. Ahmed and his colleagues believe every manager should have eGovernance knowledge and awareness.

Ahmed is still interested in expanding this program to the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Indonesia and some of the Pacific Island countries. To standardise and ensure training quality, Ahmed and his research partners are looking to offer blended training (in person and online). Ahmed is currently approaching ASEAN for funding.

In other projects, Ahmed is advising a number of PhD students on projects in developing countries around eGovernance and ICT for development. He is also researching online protection for children and the role parents play.

The Impact: Train managers and change their mindset, creating an eGovernance culture

Ahmed's research and efforts helped Bangladesh to train over 100 senior to mid level managers in how to adopt and implement ICT initiatives. These officers now know how to deliver services digitally, increasing efficiency and transparency, minimising corruption, creating new government products, and providing valuable information for strategic planning over the long term. Bangladesh serves as a role model for other governments of developing countries in how to create an eGovernance culture that benefits the country and its citizens.

Researcher

An ex public servant (defence) and IT manager, Ahmed Imran is an Information Systems researcher with a special interest in the strategic use of IT, eGovernment, and the impacts of ICT. His published textbook *eGovernment Management for Developing Countries* (with Gregor & Turner) is educating students around the world and aiding the growth of eGovernance services. Ahmed is passionate about real life problems in the area of IT implementation in unusual contexts under adverse resource constraints and unique socio-cultural conditions.

Ben Falkenmire 20.03.18