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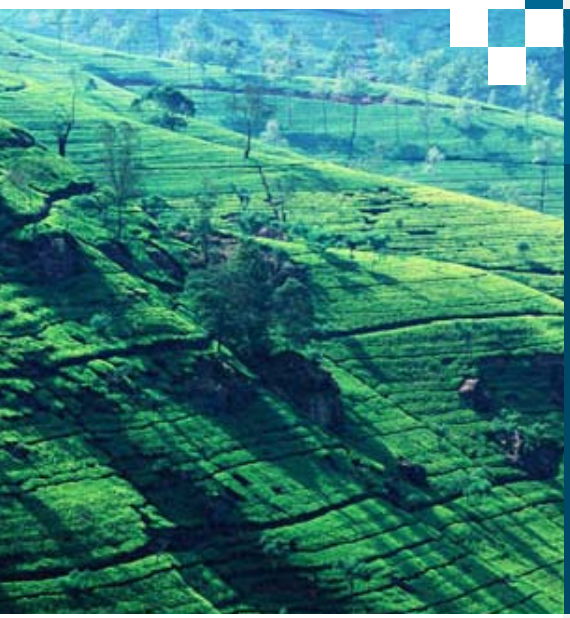


Mapping the Future

Blueprint for a Nation

INDUSTRY
- Government

CHALLENGES
- In need of an ICT master plan
- Heavy reliance on paper, leading to duplication of work
- Low ICT awareness amongst civil servants
- Poor connectivity within and across ministries
- Inadequate computer facilities

SOLUTION
- Establish ICT policies and guidelines
- Common infrastructure platform
- Government wide communication infrastructure

Sri Lanka is associated with great tea and the bluest of sapphires. This country has also been subject to many changes in its domestic policy and infrastructure, making it difficult to progress with its initial domestic policies and strategies. The situation has changed. With a stable government now in place, Sri Lanka is set on re-building its national infrastructure and looking into improving domestic policies.

The Sri Lankan government is embarking on one of their top national initiatives – an Information Communication Technology (ICT) blueprint that will eventually change the lives of its people and the business landscape of the country.

In 2003, the Information Communication Technology Agency (ICTA) of Sri Lanka was formed. The government agency has been tasked with the mission of improving the lives of every citizen and business in Sri Lanka by harnessing the power of ICT and modernising the way in which the government delivers its services to the public. With the help of the World Bank, the ICTA put up a Request for Proposal (RFP) which NCS responded to.

Despite keen global competition, NCS emerged as the choice consultant as it demonstrated strong domain experience in government and e-government.

In addition, the ICTA was also impressed with NCS' outstanding track record, large-scale ICT system integration projects and project management experience in helping Singapore achieve world-class status in e-government.

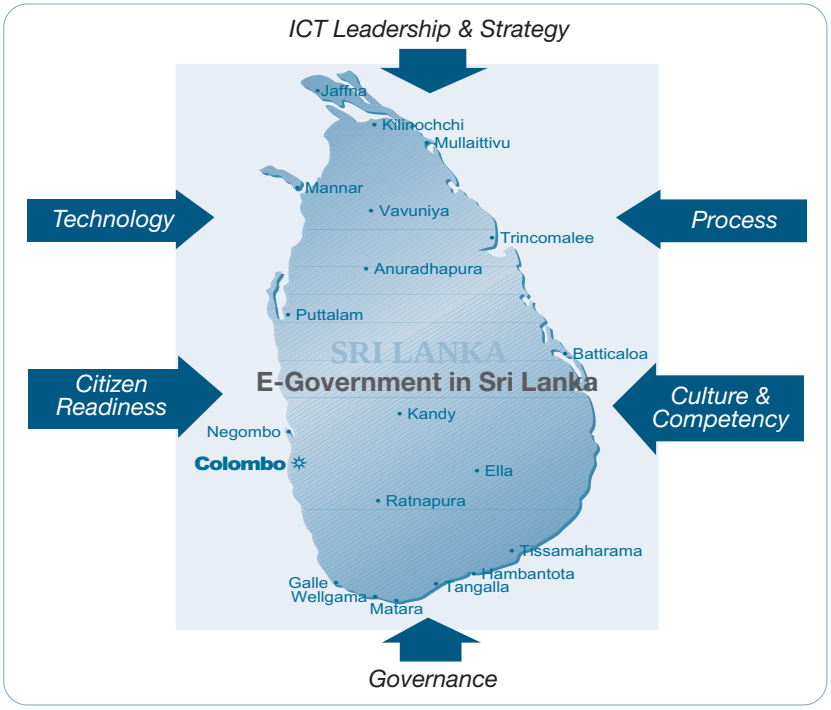
> "Our decision to appoint NCS to partner us in this important strategic Framework Study for our e-Government programme has been fully vindicated by their dedication and performance."
>
> - Manju Hathotuwa, Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer, ICTA

Forming the Blueprint ■ Working expeditiously to shape the course of Sri Lankan history, the project team took a two-phased approach. Phase 1 focused on recommending a blueprint consisting of

- a government-wide technical, information and e-service architecture,
- a suite of e-services,
- a high-level budget estimate for implementation, and
- a set of e-governance standards and practices.

These recommendations served to guide the development, implementation and ongoing maintenance of all e-government initiatives.

A key activity in Phase 1 involved a comprehensive Strategic e-Government Review to among other things, understand the current state of ICT in government as well as the ICT competency and readiness of civil servants at all levels.



Participation came from both the public and private sectors. Based on this and other inputs, NCS developed and prioritised the e-Services to be implemented by the Government over a period of time.

Phase 2 of the project involved developing the implementation strategy for developing and rolling out key projects. The strategy also included a training roadmap for all public employees to equip them with the necessary ICT skills that will enable them to use IT effectively in their work. This was undertaken to help the ICTA jumpstart the implementation phase following the consulting phase.

Benefits for All ■ The establishment of ICT policies and guidelines will help to achieve transparency, efficiency and cost effectiveness in government. A common infrastructure comprising common application services such as payment, security and electronic data exchange will provide a plethora of advantages in the form of government-wide cost savings. Undoubtedly, this will lead to higher productivity within government circles and the country.

Piloting for the Future ■ The piloting of e-Services will help promote transparency in government, enhance Sri Lanka's labour market competitiveness against countries in the region, reduce business cost in transacting with the government and improve customer convenience by allowing online access to government services.

This project has generated a lot of interest and enthusiasm across the government ministries in Sri Lanka. It has served as a platform for them to justify and seek the necessary funding to realise their ICT objectives. Following this study, the World Bank has recently approved US$53 million credit for its first integrated e-development project, which will be implemented over a period of 5 years commencing from November 2004.

For NCS consultants, the reward is being part of nation building. Said Dr Chong Yoke Sin, Chief Operating Officer of NCS, "We were driven by the fact that our work will have a positive impact on a nation, on the social and economic well-being of Sri Lankans. It will impact the students, the business community, the rural folks and the civil servants. Just think about it for a moment - IT is being used to power the re-birth of a nation. The government has great foresight in harnessing the strength of IT and we look forward to working with them to realise their vision".

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ncs making IT happen

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