

# **The Role of Information and Communication Technology in delivering Diplomatic Services for growth and development of Tanzania**

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## **Abstract**

Rapid development of information and communication technologies (ICT) has led to significant changes in social, economical and political relations of the modern society. Access to information and control over it contribute to the prevalence of soft power in politics of digital age, and empower the non-state actors in international relations. Contemporary diplomatic service, besides being faced with enhanced roles, requests for extended outreach and accountability, yet shrinking resources, is also challenged with multi stakeholder and multidisciplinary international arena. The presence of information and communication technologies (ICT) has somewhat carved out an alternative path to development. This paper examines The Role of Information and Communication Technology in delivering Diplomatic Services, a case of Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation. Both qualitative and quantitative research designs were applied. The study populations were from the ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Tanzania with the sample of 100 respondents drawn purposively. Interviews, questionnaires, and focus group discussion were instrument used to collect Primary data. The data analysis involved descriptive statistics using the Statistical Package for Social Scientists (SPSSx) computer programmes. The study findings show that, ICT has a significant role to play in delivering diplomatic services in Tanzania. About (60%) of the respondents agreed to use E-mails and internet to deliver diplomatic services to the citizens.

**Keywords:** Information, ICT, Diplomacy, Diplomatic services

## **Introduction**

The dawn of the 21st century saw a great leap in the evolution of information communication Technology (ICT) and its uses ICT is increasingly being recognized as a powerful enabler of economic and social development. Information and communication technologies (ICTs) permeate every aspect of our lives; from Community radios in the most rural parts of the globe to cellular phones in the hands of women and men in every community on earth, to computers in almost every medium to large organization. The advancement of

ICTs has brought new opportunities for both knowledge sharing and knowledge gathering to the extent that the global community can reach heretofore unconnected individuals, families, and populations to better understand their needs and challenges (Asanga, 2012). ICT can provide unlimited opportunities for economic development and social engagement through new innovative thinking and tools. The adoption of modern technology can be a key driver for economic and social growth in transitioning and developing countries. ICT can advance economic growth, enhance social inclusion, increase health and education services and improve governance at all levels This is acknowledged by the United Nations Millennium Development Declaration, which calls to “ensure that the benefits of new technologies, especially information and communication technologies are available to all (Annan ,2003). Therefore, the main objectives of this study were to examine the Role if ICT in delivering diplomatic services in Tanzania.

## **Conceptual Framework for diplomatic awareness in Tanzania**

### **2.1 Concepts and Definitions**

#### **2.1.1 Information**

Information is defined as a meaningful message transmitted from one person to another for the purpose of bringing a change to the users (Chailla, 2001). Insisting on the importance of information, Ocholla (1998) reported that availability of information for exploitation and usage by all people pose a major challenge and responsibility to the modern societies that increasingly consume post-industrial products and services. Inadequate information is a major constraint in delivering diplomatic services in Tanzania

#### **2.1.2 Diplomacy**

The term diplomacy is defined as the means or methods of conducting foreign policy of a nation through negotiation. It supposes to ensure the maximum advantage for a nation by means of negotiation and compromise (Rathod (2004 and Ivor (2009). They all remarked that, the best means devised by civilization for preventing international relations from being governed by force alone is what we call diplomacy. On the other hand, Satow (1986) defined diplomacy as an application of intelligence and tact to the conduct of official relations between the government of independent state, extending sometimes also to their relations with vassal states; or more than, briefly still the conduct of business between states by peaceful means.

Diplomacy is an instrument of statecraft. It originally was an instrument of states to deal with other states (kopp et al, 2008). The basic tasks of diplomats have been to provide information and to negotiate .After international governmental organizations (IGOs) had been established in Tanzania they also became involved in diplomacy. The main focus of diplomacy in Tanzania and all over the World was and is on communication. As far as content is concerned, also diplomacy is used to manage the goals of foreign policy.

#### **2.1.3 Information and Communication Technology (ICT)**

The term Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) is concerned with the storage, retrieval, manipulation, transmission or receipt of digital data. The data is transferred or communicated to people over long distances electronic means. ICT reflect the seamless convergence of digital processing and telecommunications. It is refers to the use of Technologies such as computers, the internet, mobile phones and traditional media such as radio, to advance human and social development.

#### **2.1.4 Diplomatic service**

Diplomatic service, refers to the body of diplomats (diplomat, this is a person appointed by a country to conduct diplomacy with another state) and foreign policy officers maintained by the government of a country to communicate with the governments of other countries (Kopp et al., 2008). Diplomatic practices in Tanzania are very wide; for instance, is the content of foreign relations, this comprising the aspirations and aims, which a country like Tanzania wants to achieve in its relations with other states and IGOs. States define their interests. Since interests of states are heterogeneous they cannot be subsumed under a common denominator (Daily News Paper, 2011). In Tanzania for example, a country use to formulate and publish their foreign policy goals. Often a country's foreign policy goals are contained in various documents, including important statements, speeches, and interviews of political leaders, releases for the media and instructions to diplomats (ibid.). According to Nweke (2006) before the advent of ICT, every international relations begins with verbal communications, but pointed out that now day, it begins online via the Internet, even before the initial meeting of the concerns physically.

Moreover, in Tanzania, an important part of diplomatic activities are negotiations, a special form of communication. Negotiating according to (Leonard, 2010), means trying to reach an understanding by discussion. Sometimes the understanding takes the form of an agreement that is a treaty in writing (ibid.). It is easy to reach an understanding if the national interests of the partners overlap. In this case, the Tanzanian diplomats perform the traditional role of trying to balance the interests of states. The diplomat's aim of protecting his country's interests is realized by cooperation, by trying to avoid clashes between the diverging interests, and by intervening if violations occur. Observing the developments in a host country or an IGO and reporting about them facilitate the understanding and thus create favorable terms for a dialogue. Tanzania Diplomats face competition by the press, press agencies, radio, television, and the World Wide Web (opcit.).

### **2.3 Empirical review**

Information communication and technology (ICT) is seen as a tool to support the work of governmental institutions and agencies with the objectives of delivering public services especially diplomatic services and information in a more convenient, citizen-centric and cost effective manner. In other words, ICT can be an effective tool to ensure increased accessibility, inclusivity and flexibility of government services and increased productivity. ICT plays a vital role in advancing economic growth and reducing poverty. A survey of firms carried out in 56 developing countries finds that firms that use ICT grow faster, invest more, and are more productive and profitable than those that do not. This report revealed that, ICTs can be used to directly influence the productivity, cost effectiveness and competitiveness in industries, which developing countries can build their economies upon. The application of technology can result in economic benefits had never been that easier. In the same vein Asanga (2012) reported that, ICT has contributed towards two key elements that are crucial in the act of diplomacy, namely space and time by paving a way towards the compression of time and space in international relations. For instance, the assassination of Osama Bin Laden in May 2011 was transmitted around the world almost instantaneously. A study done by Ogunsola ( 2005) revealed that governments worldwide have recognized the role that, Information and Communication Technologies could play in socio-economic development. A number of countries especially those in the developed world and some in developing countries are putting in place policies and plans designed to transform their economies into

an information and knowledge economy .To support this argument Beatty ( 2008) reported that, the ICT application and use has become a common phenomenon globally.

The informational aspect is necessary in order for foreign policy aims to be realistic. ICT, for diplomatic can produce economic benefit by generating revenue to the local country. For example, public officers concerned with trade and investment issues through ICT, can be able to provide good quality service to internal and external customers. There are many instruments Currently which are useful, but which so far have been left outside the framework of diplomatic work, such as the Chart ICT based tools available including computers and the Internet, television, radio, mobile phones (Ipad, phone smart phone),Websites, Portal and database, the Newsgroups and video conferencing (Baluah,2012). She added that, through the use of the Internet a diplomat can also accomplish a significant amount of diplomatic work, such as consular and administrative matters. Most consular information is today available on the web pages of the various embassies. The major work of consulates, the granting of visas, is becoming much quicker because the interested party can download the visa application form, find out about the necessary requirements, and visit the consulate just for the interview .Therefore the Internet can be characterized as a useful and necessary tool for fulfilling consular and administrative tasks(ibid).

Tanzania has not left behind these advancements whereby in many sectors such as education, health, Agriculture, Ministry, judiciary and private sector ICT is applied. In order to facilitate the use of ICT, Tanzania's adopted the National ICT policy in March 2003, which recognizes the new opportunities in applying ICT to enhance education, including curriculum development, teaching methodologies, simulation laboratories, life-long learning and distance education. Not only that but also, the policy calls for the development of a nationwide e-education system, the teaching of ICT at all levels of education and training, and the use of ICT to improve the quality of delivery of education (section 3.4). It also recognizes the role of the education system in nurturing ICT skills for future labor markets.(Mbwafu,2011). The information revolution and the extraordinary increase in the spread of knowledge have given birth to a new era of knowledge and information which affects directly economic, social, cultural and political activities of all regions of the world, including Tanzania..

However, a diplomat is needed to assess the relevance of the information with regard to his country's and the host country's foreign policy. That is, the diplomat is needed for "proper contextualization. On top of that, there are traditional taboo areas for diplomatic intercourse in Tanzania. Diplomats may use only lawful means, have to respect the laws and regulations of the host country, and are prohibited from interfering in the internal affairs of other country (The Citizen, 2011). The challenge of information delivery is about all citizens who demand quality diplomatic services from public services. The quick spread of globalization means that services must be provided not only to citizens of one country, but also to citizens of other countries who are doing business.

### **Diplomatic Practices in Tanzania**

Diplomacy is an instrument of statecraft. It originally was an instrument of states to deal with other states (kopp et al, 2008). After international governmental organizations (IGOs) had been established in Tanzania they also became involved in diplomacy. The main focus of diplomacy in Tanzania and all over the World was and is on communication. As far as content is concerned, also diplomacy is used to manage the goals of foreign policy. Diplomatic

work in Tanzania proceeds along the same norms, rules, and practices that are appropriate to reach the target. As far as its functioning is concerned, diplomacy is an independent institution, only subject to historical contingencies (Phillips, 2012). The dualism between foreign policy and diplomacy is the starting point for an analysis of Tanzania diplomatic practices (ibid.).

Diplomatic practices in Tanzania are very wide; for instance, is the content of foreign relations, this comprising the aspirations and aims, which a country like Tanzania wants to achieve in its relations with other states and IGOs. States define their interests. Since interests of states are heterogeneous they cannot be subsumed under a common denominator (Daily News Paper, 2011). In Tanzania for example, a country use to formulate and publish their foreign policy goals. Often a country's foreign policy goals are contained in various documents, including important statements, speeches, and interviews of political leaders, releases for the media and instructions to diplomats (ibid).

Despite the fact that, citizen's diplomacy has been experienced for decades, it has just attracted much interest of scholars since the post-Cold War, (Snow and Taylor, 2009). There are numerous researches on citizen diplomacy practices of great powers like United Kingdom, United States of America Australia, Germany and emerging powers such as Indi, China and Norway. However, there are few researches on citizen diplomatic awareness by other practitioners, particular in small countries and political organizations like Tanzania signifying that the approaches devised to create citizens awareness on diplomatic issues might be ineffective (Leonard, 2010). According to Gilboa (2008), there are four weaknesses of existing researches on citizens diplomatic awareness among these include intensive focus on experiences of the US during the Cold War, while lack researches on citizen diplomacy activities of the countries other than the US and other new actors such as non-governmental organizations, individuals and civil society organizations. More terribly, in Tanzania citizen participation on diplomatic issues is seem to be very low which an indication of low diplomatic awareness among Tanzanians is. While the situation persists, very little studies have been carried out to assess the role of ICT on delivering on diplomatic services to the citizens. The previously studies done by Miller (2001),Navy (2001) and Tweve (2000) provided evidence in the increase use and adoption of ICT in Tanzania while Change (2003) Kakana (2003).Mswanyana (2004),Manada and Msuya (2007) discussed the application and uses of ICT in difference sector such as finance ,Environment and Education, Ndimbwa (2009) on the role of ICT in promoting Tourism and only Mukasa (2009) discussed the application of ICT in the diplomatic service as well as its relation to economic development. From these studies it is evidently that, very little is written and known on the role of ICT in delivering diplomatic services in Tanzania. Thus, this is the gap that this study attempted to bridge.

## **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

### **3.1 Research Design and Unity of Analysis**

The study was carried out in Dare s Salaam region which is located in the East Coast of Tanzania. It is bordered by Indian Ocean to the East and on all other sides by coastal region. The selection of the area was due to two reasons; first, Dar es Salaam has a big population over 4 Million people of different characters; most of them have no formal employment. Due to the nature of the study a case study design was adopted in this study because it was not possible to study the whole community of Dar es Salaam region. This method is able to

describe the existing perception, attitudes, behaviors or values of individuals within a household (Mason, 2002; Leedy, 2005). Also, the quantitative method was used to collect some statistical data on the demographic and other socio-economic aspects of the target population. The population of this study included men and women over 18 years. The researcher decided to select this age (above 15years) as respondents because in Tanzania, a person who is at the age of 18, is considered to be an adult with his or her own independent family life. A total of one hundred (100) respondents were selected from the ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation.

The collected data from the field were verified, compiled and coded prior to analysis which was done using the Statistical package for social scientists (SPSSx) computer programmes. Data from the structured questions were analyzed quantitatively and the results are presented in tables and figures in frequencies and percentages. While the qualitative data from the open-ended questions and focus group discussions were analyzed through classification and reorganization of different sub themes, as well as identification of similar and dissimilar aspects of the study in the interviews. Quantitative and qualitative results are reported concurrently in such a way that the qualitative results are used to elaborate and validate the quantitative findings. Tables and percentages were also used to present the findings of this study.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 4.1 Respondents' Demographic Information

The target populations were 150 employees from where the researcher took a sample of 100 due to time constraints and the large numbers of employees for the in Foreign Ministry were very busy and distributed questionnaires accordingly Table presents the descriptive statistics of demographic information of the sample taken from the Ministry. The finding in Table 1 shows that the majority respondents (50%) were between 31-40 years, followed by 22% of the respondents with age group of 18-30. About (18%) of the respondents had age group between 41 and 45, while about (10 %) were above 50 years. these respondents had higher level of education , most of them had attained degree and masters. however there were few who had primary and secondary education level. See the findings in Table 1;

**Table 1: Respondents' Demographic Information (N=100)**

Demographics	Label	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	60	60
	Female	40	40
	<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>
Age Group	18-30 yrs	22	22
	31--45 yrs	50	50
	45-50 yrs	18	18
	Above50 yrs	10	10
	<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>
Education level	Primary education	10	10
	Secondary education	30	30
	Degree	50	50
	Masters	10	10

	<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>
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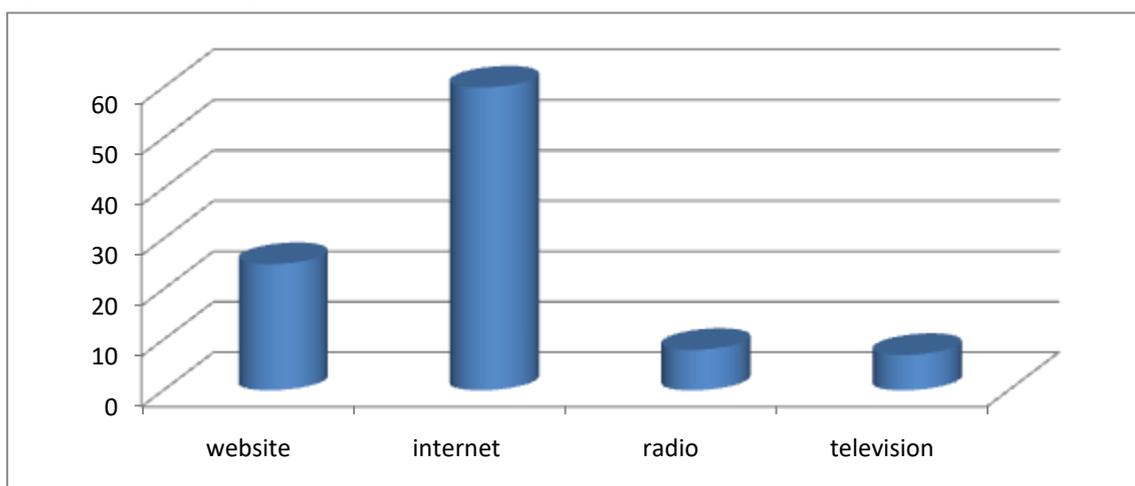
Source: Researcher’s Field Data Analysis (2013)

These findings are related to those conducted by Mukasa (2009) who reports similar results that about 75% of the population staff at foreign ministry were between 31 to 45 years old; this reflects the working population of Tanzania that means employees at foreign Ministry were effectively in delivering diplomatic services. Again, the findings show that there were more female (60%) respondents than male (40%) in the study area.

**4.2 Technology tool used at Ministry**

In order to be able to deliver services quickly and efficiently, civil servants need to have ICTs physically available. With this question, the researcher wished to determine whether or not civil servants have access to ICT tools that would enable them to improve diplomatic service delivery. The study findings were as follows; out of 100 respondents, 60 (60%) of the respondents mentioned internet service, 8 (8%) of the respondents said website while 25 (25%) of the respondent said Radio while only 7 (7%) of the respondents mentioned television. Like the study in the study made by Olivier (2002) argues that Computerizing of MoFA’s has made the Ministry to have internal services, creating an intranet, and creating Web-enabled citizen services. The study discovered that, there is lack of advanced technology at ministry such as Teleconference and Videoconference which if used efficiently will help the staff not to travel every time abroad for small things which are more expensive and time consuming while they can use such technology for the some meeting. Philemon (2010) Shortage of skilled staff, lack of fund and non-availability of modern computer equipment have been cited as the key factors impeding services delivery in ministry and its departments. Other impediments include inadequate resourcing for management information systems. See Figure 1;

**Figure 1; Technology and ICT tools used at Ministry**



Source: Researcher’s Field Data Analysis (2013)

These methods or media includes: Website, Radio, Television, Internet service, emails and video conference. The study shows that (25%) of the respondents mentioned the use Website to deliver diplomatic services. About (60%) of the respondents said they use E-mails while only (8%) of the respondents voted for radio, video conference and (7%)

mentioned Television as a source to get diplomatic information as Table 2 show the method or media used by foreign ministry to disseminate information.

**Table 2: Representing the descriptive statistics of the Ministry**

	Category	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
	Internet service	2	10.0	10.0
	Website	7	35.0	45.0
	Video conference	1	5.0	50.0
	Internet (E-mail)	8	40.0	90.0
	Radio	1	5.0	95.0
	TV	1	5.0	100.0
	Total	20	100.0	

**Source: Researcher's Field Data Analysis (2013)**

These findings do not differ with those found by Abdul (2002) that, about 70% of diplomatic staff were aware on the Ministry Web site but only 15% of respondents had ever visited that site while (20%) were using the ministry Website. Again about 30% of the respondents had an email account, and only at all. 90% used face-to-face meetings as their means of communicating with colleagues, and less than 1% had ever used any form of teleconference.

#### **4.4 The role of ICT in various Sectors:**

Information, Communication and Technology (ICT) are key factors in socio-economic development. Access to relevant information and knowledge improves efficiency and productivity; enhances social services delivery; increases access to market opportunities; and improves government performance, among others (UNDP, 2001). The study finding revealed that, almost all respondent agree that ICT had a big role to play in delivery diplomatic service in Tanzania. On the other hand, in attempting to understand whether the ICT has big roles in diplomatic services or not, the findings revealed that, about 85 respondents (85%) agreed that ICT has a big role to play while 10 respondents (10%) reported to have no information and about 5 respondents (5%) reported to be unaware on the contribution of ICT in delivering diplomatic services at ministry. Elly (2002) argued that it is obvious that ICT application and used in different sectors has the potential to enhance development and reduce cost when applied effectively in information management process as services. In addition to that, a study done by Olivier (2002) recommended that, the ministry can play a supporting role in delivery diplomatic services; it saw that many UN documents and data were being made available electronically. It therefore perceived that ICTs could change the way that diplomatic missions worked: reducing the need for collecting and sending so much paper, and reducing use of the diplomatic bag; and enabling discussions and decisions by participants who were located in different parts of the world. Msona (2005) observes that ICT equips the society with skills for improving living standard by promoting business interacts through various means such as e-commerce.

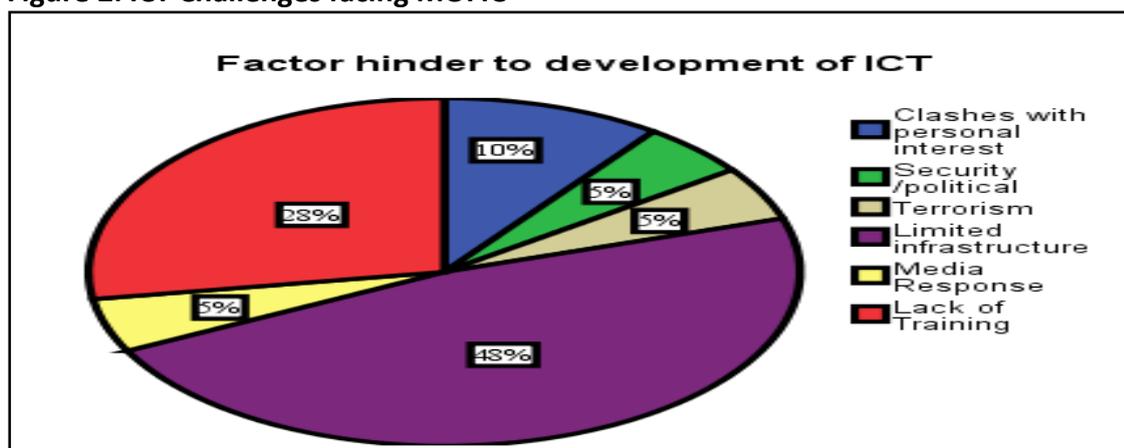
Chande (2003) observed that, computerization in NMB had brought service closer to customer like PesaFasta, According to Killagane (2004) argue that adoptions of ICT facilitate

helping to improve efficiency in Micro-finance. Saverinus (2008) Nowadays the role of Information and Communication Technology (ICT), especially internet in the education sector plays an important role, especially in the process of empowering the technology into the educational activities. (Internet) in another side can be the most effective way to increase the student’s knowledge. In our inter-connected world, knowledge and information are becoming corner stone’s for the development of a society, as is the ability to communicate. Ndimbwa (2009) observed that, the exchange of information is very important in promoting the tourism product through using ICT. Information must be able to flow quickly and accurately between the client, intermediaries and each of the tourism suppliers involved in servicing the client’s needs. Additionally, studies done by Bell, (1986; Boon, 1992: Camble 1994: Sturges and Neill, 1998 revealed that, information plays such an important role in almost every human activity; its value in the development process has been a topic of extensive debate ,hence, lack of information has impacted negatively on the development process. In the same vein Panos (1998) Stated that, “access to information is an essential condition for development”. Every society needs to acquire, store, and exchange this basic stock of information to allow it to survive.

**4.5 Challenges facing the Ministry concerning with ICT**

During a study researchers observed poor infrastructural such as inadequate telephone lines, power cutting off and networking cutting off when someone is logged onto the Internet connections and Web access. These problems can quite often inhibit users of ICTs from working efficiently, or they can lead users to rather opt for paper-based or manual analyses. This question, therefore, sought to identify the problems that Ministry face when using ICT tools for work purposes or during the service delivery process. See the findings in Figure 2;

**Figure 2: ICT Challenges facing MOFIC**



Source: Researcher’s Field Data Analysis (2013)

**Conclusion:**

The study concludes that, ICT has not well used effectively in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Co-operation of Tanzania whereby diplomatic bag as the main way

to send and receive information between the Ministry and its overseas missions. There is neither teleconference nor videoconference has been organized at ministry and Internet relay chat has not been used for any discussion or decision-making. Diplomats still fly abroad to attend conferences hence the travel budget remains unaffected.

**Recommendation:**

The study recommended that, there is the need for refocusing on the role of information in delivering diplomatic services to the Tanzania citizens and ICT as a tool for change agent. Initiatives for Foreign ministry must then emphasize on the importance of information in addressing the diplomatic information needs of the citizens. The Ministry should provide Internet access to all members of staff in all the departments as well as providing ICT training to staff so as to enable them to access accurate information to ambassador and citizen. Also the ministry should be ready to adopt new ICT techniques such as Teleconferences, videoconferences, website, internet and others so as to deliver good services and reduce unnecessary cost.

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