DEPUTY CHIEF MIGRATION OFFICER, CORPORATE SERVICES
JOSEPH NOBETAU

PRESENTATION TO THE 2013 PIDC INFORMATION AND
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WORKSHOP

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PURPOSE OF ICT IN AN IMMIGRATION DEPARTMENT

INTRODUCTION

- *[Introduce self}*

- Pleased to be invited by the PIDC Secretariat to speak about **the purpose of Information and Communication Technology in an immigration department**.

- PNG values the important role of the PIDC in facilitating discussion on immigration matters within our region

    - we look forward to welcoming all PIDC members to PNG for the annual meeting later this year.

- For many years immigration agencies across the Pacific have done a good job to protect their borders and facilitate travel with limited personnel, equipment and technology.

- However times are changing:

    - larger numbers of people are travelling

    - people smugglers and other criminals are using increasingly sophisticated methods

    - and the rapid pace of development of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) is changing the way that governments, businesses and other organisations operate

- it is a time of unprecedented challenges and opportunity.

- Effectively used, ICT can enable governments to:

  - reduce **costs** and improve **efficiency**

  - improve **client service**

  - enhance **security**, and

  - coordinate operations over a **wider area.**

- However, the rapid pace of change also creates **risks for governments that do not invest in ICT**, or make unwise ICT choices.

- My presentation will focus on the purposes for which PNG ICSA has used ICT, particularly in the key functional areas of:

  - **visa processing**

  - **border security** and **immigration compliance**

  - **passport issuance**

  - **citizenship**

  - **client communication**

  - **corporate services,** and

  - **information sharing with other government agencies.**

- The ICT needs of each country will differ - I am not presenting the PNG example as one that would work for all countries

  - but I will also comment on the **lessons that PNG has learnt** from its ICT program – hopefully these will be **relevant to all**.

VISA PROCESSING

- PNG's main visa processing system is the **Border Management System (BMS)**

    – PNG appreciates the substantial financial and technical **support that DIAC** has provided in the development and implementation of BMS.

- BMS was first implemented in 2005 and is an integrated system for processing **visas, movements and alerts**.

- By the mid-2014 it will be rolled out to 22 offices in PNG and overseas.

    – PNG ICSA will then continue to roll it out to all overseas missions, domestic offices and major international border points.

- The BMS provides **data connectivity between all offices** and border points at which it is installed. This provides for a consolidated immigration data record.

- By mid 2014 it is estimated that BMS will capture approximately:

    – 90% of PNG visa applications; and

    – 75% of entries to and exits from PNG.

- This will mean:

    – a border officer at Jacksons International Airport will know that a passenger has been granted a visa in Brussels

    – a visa officer in Auckland will know that an applicant was previously refused a visa in Suva

    – either of these offices will know if the passenger or visa applicant has an alert against them.

- Importantly, the globally integrated system means that certain visa types can be lodged overseas, with approval being restricted to the ICSA head office in Port Moresby

  – this brings **significant integrity benefits.**

- Integrated statistical reporting means that Managers in Port Moresby can monitor processing performance by visa type or by office to identify areas that may require process improvement or support.

- BMS has also resulted in processing efficiencies:

  – since the implementation of BMS, ICSA has managed a **20% growth in visa applications and movements per year** – with a comparatively much lower growth in staffing numbers.

- So, what are the **lessons that PNG ICSA has learnt from the implementation of BMS**?

  1. Implementing ICT systems is a **big job**

     – BMS has taken 7 years - still very much a work in progress

     – planning for systems development and implementation should be **long term.**

  2. ICT systems need to be **designed for where your organisation will be in future**

     – even before its complete implementation, BMS is starting to 'groan at the edges'

     – its connectivity is based upon regular data synchronisation and the number of BMS sites is starting to put pressure on the capacity to regularly synchronise all sites. As a result, a number of '**data hubs**' will need to be established around the world to enable this

- to avoid 'retrofitting' these solutions, it is important that the final purpose and end-state of the system is clearly understood and agreed from the beginning.

3. ICT systems are **expensive**

   - unable to give an exact cost for the system, but expect it is greater than $10 million

   - immigration agencies should consider **not just the initial cost** of a system but **also ongoing development costs** and **maintenance and support costs.**

4. ICT sections within immigration agencies **need to be well staffed**

   - DIAC has allocated up to 10 people at certain times for the development and roll out of BMS, including specialists such as business analysts, project managers, trainers, and IT engineers.

   - when ICSA takes full responsibility for BMS next year we will struggle to be able to allocate sufficient staff for the ongoing system development and maintenance

   - will be difficult to recruit appropriately skilled and qualified people.

BORDER SECURITY AND IMMIGRATION COMPLIANCE

- BMS has significantly enhanced PNG's border management capabilities

  - as previously discussed, PNG is now able to **check that all arrivals** at BMS ports **have valid visas**

  - clients are checked against PNG's **alert lists** at the time of visa application, arrival and departure

  - **passport scanners** linked to BMS provide an additional layer of document integrity checks.

- While this has helped to prevent people smuggling and irregular migration through Port Moresby, the situation in non-BMS ports is unclear.

- BMS is currently limited in its ability to support PNG ICSA's immigration compliance activities

  - this important immigration function was not fully considered when the system was designed

  - data errors and inappropriate data fields limit the system's usefulness for intelligence analysis or operational investigations.

- The lesson that PNG ICSA has learnt from its inability to fully utilise BMS for immigration compliance purposes is that the **full range of possible uses of an ICT system must be carefully considered** during its design phase.

PASSPORT PROCESSING

- PNG operates a Tardis passport processing system, that has been regularly upgraded to incorporate new passport security features

  - soon implementing a **new series of passport**

  - and **facial recognition technology** within the processing system

  - recognise that constant security improvement is necessary to stay ahead of forgers.

- PNG intends to implement a bio-metric passport and new issuance system by 2015. This will provide:

  - greater identity security – biometric capture will lock passport holders to one identity

  - improved passenger facilitation through the use of technologies such as Smart Gate overseas and potentially in PNG.

- PNG's Chief Migration Officer visited the ICAO Travel Document Symposium in 2012. ICAO noted that around **80% of countries with biometric passports do not actually utilise the biometric technology properly**.

- PNG has invited an **ICAO technical team** to:

  - evaluate PNG's passport issuance system;
  - make recommendations on the way forward to effectively introduce a biometric passport
  - help identify reputable suppliers that can provide appropriate solutions.

- So, what are the **lessons that PNG ICSA has learnt by planning changes to its passport system**?

  1. There is **value in expert advice**

     - PNG does not want to join the long list of countries that spends millions on a biometric passport system, but does not properly utilise its features.

  2. Planning should cover **short, medium and long-term needs**

     - PNG continues to make improvements to its existing passport system while planning for the longer-term introduction of a replacement system.

CITIZENSHIP

- PNG's citizenship processing and records system is out-dated and doesn't function properly

  - As a result, citizenship processing in PNG is paper-based.

- A properly functioning citizenship ICT system could be linked to PNG's passport system to provide a common data source and increase integrity.

- However, over the last three years PNG has only naturalised 19 people

  - based on these numbers, it is difficult to justify the significant financial and staffing resources that would be required to establish a new ICT system.

  - replacement of PNG's citizenship system remains a long-term goal.

- The lesson that PNG has learnt from assessing its ICT needs for citizenship processing is that **ICT resources and activities must be prioritised**

  - while it would be ideal to have top class systems for every area of and immigration agency's business, resources must be allocated to where they can provide the greatest benefit.

CLIENT COMMUNICATION

- The majority of PNG ICSA's communication with clients is either face-to-face, via telephone or through e-mail maiboxes.

- PNG has developed an **immigration website** that provides a range of information and resources for clients

  - by providing clients with forms and their most sought after information on the website, fewer clients directly contact ICSA

  - however, in a changing policy environment, it is difficult to keep this information up to date

  - out of date or conflicting information on the website can result in the unintended effect of more client contact to ICSA.

- The website also allows clients to **track the process of their application** by entering their receipt number

  - a computer terminal has also been set up in the ICSA waiting room to enable clients to access this service

- this means that they do not need to queue to speak to an immigration officer

- more work is needed to translate the information from this system into language that is more easily understandable by clients.

- PNG is also looking at options for **notifying clients** about the progress of their applications **by e-mail and by SMS**.

- So, what are the lessons that PNG has learnt from its client communication ICT strategies?

  1. Using ICT to provide effective client communication can **free up staff for other work**

     - by pre-emptively providing information to clients through ICT, fewer client contact the office.

  2. Keeping client communication up to date **requires dedicate staffing**

     - this has previously been a difficulty for PNG ICSA

     - PNG ICSA is currently upgrading its website to make content updates 'as easy as using gmail'

     - under a new expanded structure, PNG ICSA will employ a Media Officer, who will be responsible for keeping the website current.

CORPORATE SERVICES

- While PNG ICSA has custom built visa and passport systems, its corporate systems are not designed for ICSA's required purposes.

- Our **financial management system** is only designed for processing payments and deposits

- it does not enable the department to meet its core financial obligations, including financial reporting, bank reconciliation or budget monitoring

- this creates significant financial and legal risks for the organisation.

- PNG ICSA also does not have its own **HR/payroll system**

  - its payroll function is currently managed by the Department of Finance

  - this causes significant administrative inefficiencies.

- PNG ICSA intends to implement modernised financial management and HR/payroll systems by the end of 2013.

- The lesson that PNG ICSA has learnt from its corporate systems is that **agencies must give consideration to their overall ICT needs**

  - not just systems for their core functions.

INFORMATION SHARING WITH OTHER AGENCIES

- PNG recognises the intelligence and operational **value of sharing information between government agencies**, to the extent permitted by national laws.

- Since 2007 the PNG government has been implementing the Integrated Government Information System

  - a project to collect data from all government agencies into a central database.

- While some work has been done, it is yet not known when the system is likely to be operational, what data will be collected, or how that data will be used.

- The lessons that PNG ICSA has learnt from its involvement with the IGIS project is that **if ICT projects within your own agency are difficult, interagency projects are even more difficult**

    - a high degree of impetus, coordination and project management are required for them to proceed in a timely way.

CONCLUSION

- I have touched on a range of purposes for which immigration agencies can utilise Information and Communication Technology

    - the list of purposes will no doubt grow as technology continues to increase.

- In conclusion, ICT has the potential to bring significant benefits to every aspect of an organisation's work

    - but the investment that is required in terms of money, staffing and skills is very significant

    - failure to properly invest in ICT can limit an immigration agency's efficiency and its ability to effectively manage its borders and its immigration integrity

    - similarly making the wrong investment choices risks wasting time and money for a product that does not serve the required purposes

    - careful planning and consultation is needed to make the right choices to ensure that ICT best serves the purposes of each immigration agency.