

Leveraging ICT Platforms to Foster Citizen Engagement For Enhanced Public Accountability

—The Korean Experience

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“In Korea, citizens’ willingness to participate has been realized through the support of both online and off-line participation methods.”

Introduction

In representative democracy citizens hold the government accountable directly by voting or indirectly by delegating necessary mandates to other nongovernment entities of the accountability ecosystem, such as the courts of law, the anticorruption agency, or the supreme audit institution (SAI). As an attempt to overcome the apparent limitations of the direct accountability approach and to strengthen the indirect accountability channels, citizens participate in public processes by making their voices heard in both government activities and in the oversight of such activities.

However, it is often found that nations encounter constraints when trying to expand direct citizen participation in public matters. Common challenges of effective citizen engagement can be clustered around three main issues:

- a** how to implement citizen engagement mechanisms and strategies in an efficient and sustainable way (volume);
- b** how to achieve positive impacts (private interests); and
- c** how to reach the level of de facto citizen empowerment from the use of citizen engagement as an act of tokenism¹ (knowledge gap).

In trying to solve these challenges, countries around the world, including the Republic of Korea, have started paying more attention to the role of the information and communication technology (ICT) platform, or civic tech as it is called, to contribute to a desirable form of citizen engagement by transforming it into a more transparent, inclusive, scalable, and cost-effective process (Manroth and others 2014; Peixoto and Sifry 2017). However, in practice the results vary and, in some cases, good efforts around openness and participation run short of meeting heightened citizens’ expectations and demands.

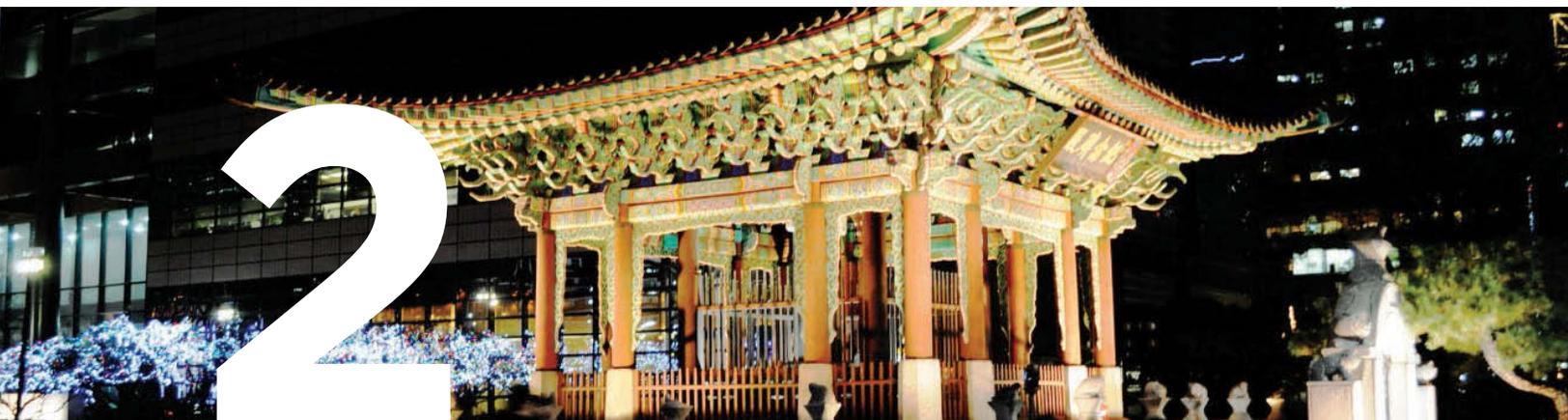
¹ See Arnstein 1969 and Damgaard and Lewis 2014 on a ladder of citizen participation.

Following the development of democracy in Korea, citizens' willingness to participate has been realized through the support of both online and off-line participation methods; new online measures have been added to the old off-line measures without replacing them, thereby producing synergy effects.

This learning note aims to document the experience of the Board of Audit and Inspection of Korea (BAI) and the online administrative appeals hub system of Korea's Central Administrative Appeals Commission (CAAC) in leveraging ICT platforms for citizen engagement. The note both

analyzes participatory practices and examines how the use of ICT platforms contributed to enhance public outreach by making citizen engagement in public accountability more cost-effective, scalable, transparent, and inclusive.

The learning note targets accountability institutions (such as supreme audit institutions, anticorruption agencies, and so on), as well as representatives from civil society organizations and citizens around the world interested in knowing more about the experience of Korea, including the challenges and opportunities, in leveraging ICT tools to foster citizen engagement for enhanced public accountability.



Participatory Audit in Korea and the Use of ICT Platforms to Foster Citizen Engagement

Public auditing is a professional activity that ensures accountability for the government's execution of its budget and for authorities on behalf of citizens. From the normative perspective, citizen participation in public audits can be justified under the condition that SAIs can maintain independence from auditees, keep political neutrality, and adhere to the relevant professional standards because citizens delegate the auditing authority and responsibility to the SAIs.² At the practical level, citizens—as the beneficiaries of public policy and services—may act as the eyes and ears of professional auditors and thereby contribute to ensuring government accountability by reducing audit blind spots, delving into policy failures, and helping to improve government services (Kim 2016). In other words, citizen participation in public audits means opening the public audit process—which has been carried out by professional and dedicated auditors within the bureaucracy—to ordinary citizens and their opinion leaders such as civil society organizations. In this way, citizen participation plays a vital role in protecting the rights and interests of citizens, fighting corruption, and enhancing accountability and performance of the public sector.³

SAIs are increasingly shifting toward performance audits that examine whether budgets are used effectively, efficiently, and economically and are shifting away from financial audits with a traditional focus on compliance to existing rules and regulations. Thus, the importance of having SAIs cooperate with citizens is even greater today.

The Board of Audit and Inspection of Korea is one of the pioneers SAIs around the world in this area of engaging citizens in the audit process, as explained in detail in the following section of this note. The BAI has gone through the information and

² See Damgaard and Lewis 2014 on the virtue of participatory accountability mechanisms.

³ See EIP 2014 for more examples of benefits of SAI engagement with citizens.

consultation stages and has now reached the stage of partnership for decision making with citizens. The BAI takes advice on its audit direction and formally receives audit requests from citizens. In addition, it takes tips on fraud, waste, or mismanagement of public funds along with civil petitions and complaints from citizens (Kim 2016).

Factors Constraining Expansion of Citizen Engagement

Before going into the practical case of the BAI, in which new ICT was leveraged to expand its citizen engagement practice, it is necessary to first examine the factors that constrain citizen engagement in audits. Compared with other stakeholders, such as parliament, the government, internal audit units, donors, and civil society organizations, citizens pose fundamental challenges to communication including, among other issues, the vast amount of participation by individual citizens, uncontrolled private interests, and a gap in professionalism.

The development of democracy has greatly enhanced citizens' desire to participate. The amount of citizen engagement entails considerable costs on the side of the citizens in time and effort devoted and significant administrative costs on the side of the SAIs, including more staff hours used by the auditing body to respond to citizens.

If a citizen engagement scheme is introduced without proper backup of SAIs' dedicated staff responsible for handling citizen engagement, the auditing body will not be able to respond to citizen participation in time. The participating citizens' satisfaction and trust will eventually lower, which will damage the cooperative relationship between the citizens and the auditing body. Failure to respond to citizens in time will become more problematic when coupled with the private interests of participating citizens.

Also, a citizen engagement scheme should not be introduced without adequate measures to control risks associated with various private-interest issues in advance. If the scheme is introduced without those measures, not only will it fail to produce performance proportionate to the use of the SAI's scarce human resources, but also it will cause the involved auditors to lose confidence in the value and validity of citizen engagement. This will result either

in the discontinuation of existing citizen engagement schemes or in a formalistic and minimal operation of citizen engagement programs to meet only mandatory requirements.

As government operations continue to become more specialized and complex, and as work boundaries also become blurred because of overlapping authorities among government agencies, the disparity in access to information—and thus in knowledge, understanding, and professionalism—grows between the government and citizens on the one hand and among differing groups of citizens on the other hand. The disparity among citizens may restrict them from playing an independent oversight role or from reaching substantial citizen empowerment; or the disparity may lead to growing inequality of the socially underprivileged.

So, the key question in leveraging the ICT platform for citizen engagement in public auditing can be singled out as whether and how ICT can help the auditing body better respond to these constraints. The experience of the Korea BAI, one of the first around the world to leverage an ICT platform for engaging with citizens, is examined to help answer this question while documenting in a practical manner the challenges and opportunities encountered by the SAI throughout the process.

The Evolution of Participatory Audit in Korea

As mentioned earlier, citizen engagement is actively taking place at each of the major audit cycles of the BAI as explained in table 1.

Moreover, figure 1 explains that citizen engagement is not just a recent phenomenon but has gradually evolved over a long time since the establishment of the BAI. Since its inception in 1963 as the result of merging the Board of Audit (the national audit agency) and the Commission of Inspection (the national inspection agency), the BAI has been expanding and developing its communications with citizens. The BAI Act of 1963 gave the BAI a mandate of reviewing and making judgments on citizens' appeals in which citizens claimed they were infringed on by unlawful government administrative dispositions or by the inaction of public authorities. This adjudication function had not

TABLE 1. Types of Citizen Engagement at the Board of Audit and Inspection, by Audit Stage

Audit Stage	Types of Citizen Engagement
Audit planning (what to audit)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Citizen Audit Request (CAR), Audit Request for Public Interests (ARPI) • Civil petitions and complaints • Advisory Committee for the BAI chairman (semiannual consultation) • Annual consultation on audit plan from external subject matter experts
Audit preparation/ implementation (how to audit)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participation of outside professionals and experts on audit team • Solicitation of information on specific audits from citizens • Disclosure of audit progress on the BAI website • Press briefings on intermediate audit results
Audit reporting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disclosure of audit reports on the BAI website • Press briefings on the key audit results • Notification of investigation results to the requesting citizens
Audit results follow-up	Disclosure of the status of implementation of the audit recommendation on the BAI website

Note: The practice of soliciting audit-related information from citizens is called an “open audit system,” in which audits scheduled to be conducted on specific public organizations, programs, or policies are announced to the public on the BAI website. An open audit is usually taken when great public interest and outcry on the audit issues exist.

existed in the organic laws of the Board of Audit and the Commission of Inspection. The BAI thus had a channel for official communications with citizens. To protect the rights of citizens and business enterprises and to improve government administration, the appeals request system is tasked with examining the decisions of government agencies that are subject to the audit of the BAI when the stakeholders of such decisions file a request for examination with the BAI for corrective measures.

In addition, citizens have complained to the BAI about the government’s decisions. They want the government to remedy the damages citizens have suffered to their rights and interests. The BAI’s investigations on such complaints have often been conducted, if necessary, in connection with audits. Against this backdrop, some cases regarding the BAI’s online platform operation for supporting citizen participation will be set forth, with a close look at civil petitions and complaints.

The purpose of operating citizen engagement in the auditing process is quite broad and includes:

- a** to protect the rights of the people,
- b** to detect and punish corruption in the public sector,
- c** to correct improper administrative actions and improve public management,
- d** to resolve citizens’ dissatisfaction or conflicts, and, of course,
- e** to support audit operations (BAI 2013) (see figure 2).

Considering the reality of Korean society, where internal whistle blowing does not work well because of the deep-rooted tradition that respects loyalty as the prime value, it is very important to oversee government activities through active citizen participation. Citizen engagement, therefore, helps expand the extension of audits by involving citizens not as bystanders but as partners. As such, citizens provide motivation and a lead to auditors to conduct audits that benefit citizens as individuals and as members of society (Park 2003, 267).

FIGURE 1. Milestones for Citizen Engagement in the BAI's Audit Process

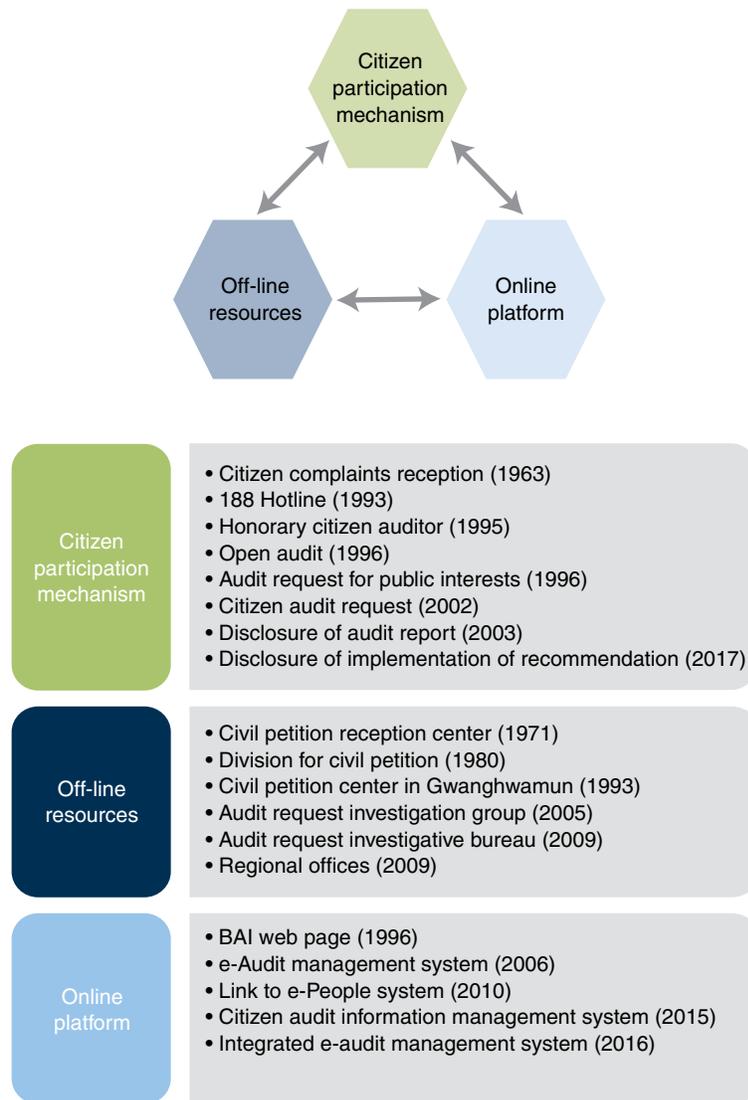
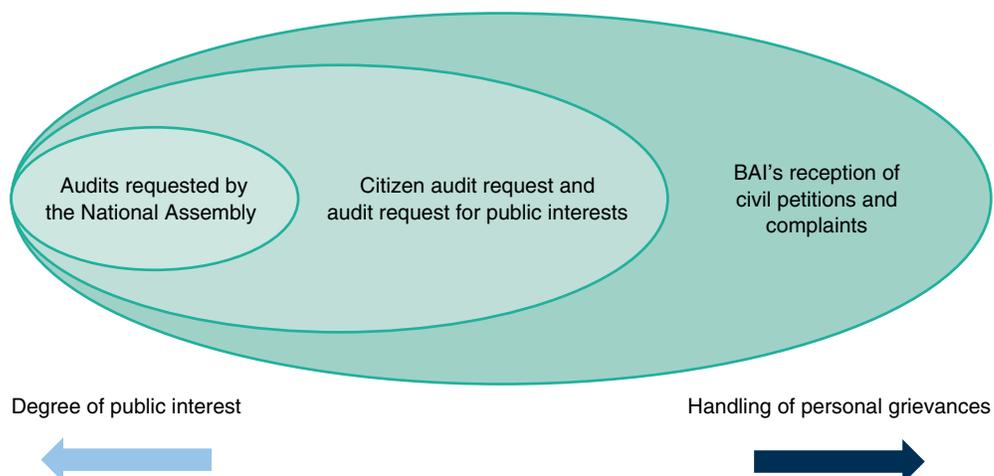


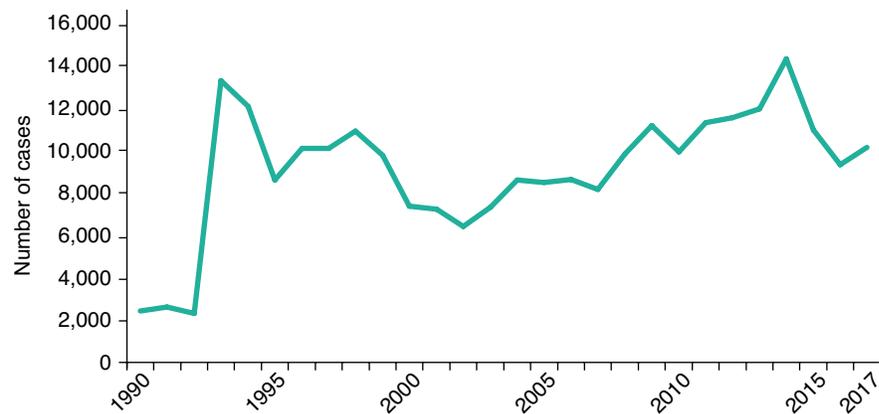
FIGURE 2. Diverse Objectives of Citizen Engagement



The number of civil petitions and complaints received by the BAI has trended upward over time. During the 1960s, the BAI received 956 civil complaints annually, which increased slowly to 1,168 in the 1970s and 1,502 in the 1980s; but the number jumped sharply in 1993 and remained around 10,000 for the rest of the 1990s. Since the 1990s, the numbers have averaged around 10,000 every

year. The drastic increase in the 1990s, more than four times compared with the 1980s, was driven by ongoing democratization in all areas of Korean society (see figure 3). This development during the 1990s triggered (a) citizens' desire to express their needs and interests in the form of civil petitions and complaints and (b) the BAI's active response to the needs of citizens.

FIGURE 3. Annual Civil Petitions and Complaints Received by the BAI, 1990–2017

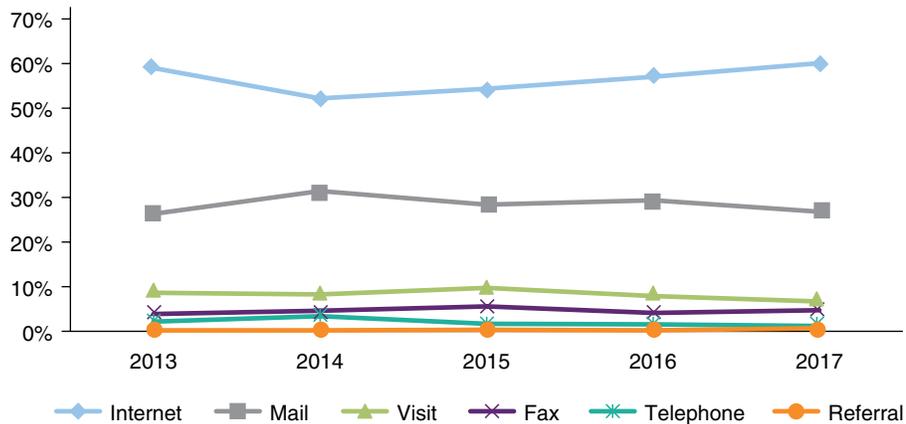


More specifically, in March 1993, the BAI established a Civil Petition and Complaint Reception Center in the well-known Gwanghwamun area in Seoul.⁴ In December of the same year, the 188 hotline was installed to receive allegations of fraud, abuse of power, and any other audit-related information from citizens. Accordingly, the number of citizen reports increased explosively from 2,305 in 1992 to 13,262 in 1993. However, within a few years the upward trend reversed and fell to the level of 6,400 in 2002. (See figure 3). This decrease could be partly attributed to the BAI's lack of organizational readiness and of required personnel to respond in a timely manner to such an explosive increase.

In the meantime, civil complaints and petitions could be reported online through the BAI website for the first time in 2000. When first introduced, the online reporting accounted for 13.6 percent of the total reports in 2000. Since then, it has increased rapidly, exceeding 50 percent of the total reports in 2006 and thereby making the online platform the most frequently used channel of citizen participation (figure 4).

The number of citizen complaints and petitions has remained around 11,000 since 2007. This steady number is due partly to the increased accessibility of online reception and to the BAI's efforts to strengthen its person-to-person interaction with citizens. For instance, the BAI established the Audit Requests Investigation Group in 2005, which was expanded again in 2009. The BAI also had established six regional centers across the country by 2013.

⁴ The Gwanghwamun area is a very popular place for Koreans and is well known for a series of large-scale citizen protests and events such as the Candlelight Revolution in late 2016 and World Cup street cheering.

FIGURE 4. Different Channels of Civil Petitions and Complaints Received by the BAI

Online Platform of the Board of Audit and Inspection: Operation Status

In light of apparent success in responding to the explosive expansion of citizen participation, more difficult challenges were confronted by the BAI, which was forced to think of other channels to engage with the public. When citizens file complaints to the BAI to report improper actions or inaction by government agencies or public officers, they expect that their own cases will be processed in a fair, timely, and transparent manner and will be handled directly by the BAI. But the reality was far from meeting those citizens' expectations. The BAI staff members could not keep up with the more than 10,000 new cases they received every year, and they had to send more than 50 percent of citizen complaints to the internal audit units of the relevant government agencies. The morale of the BAI staff members who handled citizen complaints at the Audit Requests Investigation Bureau was low because they had to handle all sorts of complaints, including personal grievances. It was also a big challenge to precisely track the processing of 11,000 cases and report the results in time to the requesters. In other words, the BAI needed a much more systematic approach to handle more than 10,000 cases annually and to meet the expectations of the citizens.

Against this backdrop, in 2015 the BAI introduced the Audit Information Management System, an ICT platform for citizen participation designed to systematically handle the processing of citizens' audit requests and complaints and petitions. The BAI also needed to reengineer citizen engagement in such a way that the BAI could decide early

on how to handle the citizen complaints and notify the requester of the decision promptly. For this purpose, the BAI intended to focus exclusively on auditable complaints and thus developed some criteria to distinguish auditable civil complaints from nonauditable ones.⁵

On the new Audit Information Reporting Center set up on the BAI website, citizens could file their own cases in four steps:

- a select an area for reporting,
- b agree to the terms and conditions,
- c submit a personal profile and the audit information, and
- d complete reporting.

After completing the consent procedure to collect and use personal information in accordance with the provisions of the Personal Information Protection Act, citizens submit a civil petition or complaint through the online platform. (See figure 5.) That step is completed when the personal profile of the submitter and the contents of the audit information to report are stored with the necessary supporting documents. The notification of receipt (including the receipt number) is automatically sent by SMS message on the system. The progress of processing the complaint and of

⁵ The BAI established this procedure by revising and enacting the Regulations on the Processing of Civil Petitions and Complaints and the Regulations on the Processing of Received Audit Information, respectively.

FIGURE 5. Audit Information Reporting Center Page of the BAI Website

Reporting audit information section

Guidance on audit information submission

- What you can report as audit information
- What cannot be accepted
- Procedures
- Submission channel
- Contact information—BAI regional offices

Download “BAI regulation on handling civil petition and complaints” and “BAI regulation on handling audit information”

the investigation result for the submitted audit information can be checked by the submitter through the BAI website, thereby making it easy to see BAI’s handling of the audit information. If submitters wish, they can be notified of the receipt and the investigation result by mail.

The system automatically assigns a registration code to the submitted audit information report. Each code contains basic information such as registration year, applicable field, cumulative number, and distinction between audit information and a purely private petition or complaint,

BOX 1. Effect of Launching an Online Civil Petition and Complaints System: *Sinmungo*

With the launch of the participatory government in 2003, *Sinmungo* (epeople.go.kr), or the government-wide system for civil petitions and complaints, was set up as a top priority of the e-government road map to unify government centers for civil petitions and complaints and to eliminate duplicate submission of civil petitions and complaints. As a result, about 15,000 annual submissions in 2003 have decreased to less than 5,000 annually. The processing period has decreased by more than half—from 44 days to 22 days on average.

Source: Kim 2007.

details into the system. Therefore, those submitters also can check the progress of handling the submission on the BAI website.⁶ For those civil petitions and complaints referred to the BAI through *Sinmungo* or e-People (box 1), the online civil complaints and petitions hub for the Korean government, citizens are also able to check the progress and result of investigations on both the BAI and e-People websites. The BAI receives approximately 800 civil petitions and complaints annually through e-People.

When an audit information report is registered with the system, a BAI staff member reviews the submission contents to see if the submission contains auditable information and if the selection of the area is appropriate. (See figures 6 and 7.) After that, the audit information report is transferred to the audit unit assigned for the investigation. All these

so that more than 10,000 submissions each year can be systematically and efficiently managed without error. In case citizens make submissions through off-line channels such as mail, visit, or telephone, each of the submissions is automatically given a code and managed in the system when BAI staff members input the audit information

⁶ In the case of the Citizen Audit Request or the Audit Request for Public Interests, an audit request can be received only through off-line channels because of the need to verify that the required 300 or more requesters have made the audit request. Even for this audit request it is possible to check the progress through the BAI website. In digital governance, however, seeking public interest audits could be sought in more efficient and accountable ways.

FIGURE 6. Procedure for Handling the Audit Information

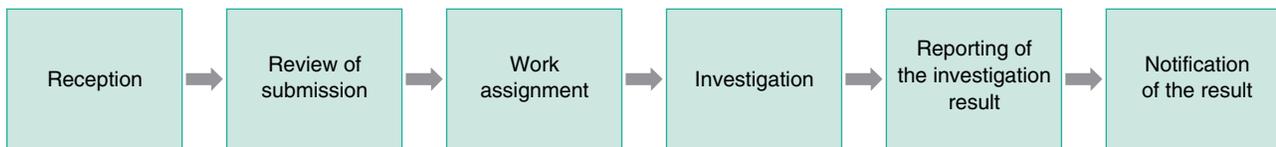


FIGURE 7. Internal Management Page of the BAI Audit Information Management System

- Handling receipts
- Receipts from all channels
- Work assignment
- Reporting results
- Processing status
- Statistics
- Form printing
- Inspection information
- Audit information submitted by auditors
- Search audit information cases
- Handling time

procedures—internal review and reporting of the result of fieldwork, notification of the final results to the submitter and related organizations, check for delayed reporting, and production of key statistics—are carried out in the system so that reporting is timely and errors from manual handling are eliminated.

Achievements and Further Challenges of the BAI Online Audit Information Management System

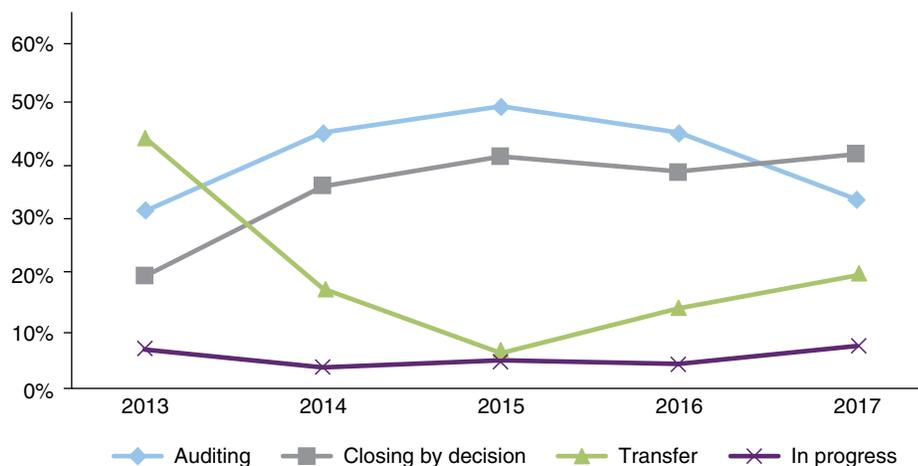
Citizens’ accessibility has been dramatically improved by the introduction of the online audit information management system and its link with the governmentwide e-People system. The citizens no longer need to worry about where and when they should file their petitions or complaints, as long as they have access to the Internet. The BAI, in turn, is now able to more efficiently manage the process of handling more than 10,000 civil petitions and complaints received through various channels. In addition, by providing follow-up service to those who submitted petitions or complaints, the BAI is able to minimize delays caused by mistakes of the responsible staff and to promptly notify the submitters of the progress and results of processing the civil petitions and complaints. In addition, because citizens can check the progress of their petitions or complaints at any time, processing civil petitions and complaints has become more transparent, and a user-friendly system for the citizens has been created. At the society level, cost savings are great because the processing of duplicate submissions of civil petitions and complaints is avoided.

With the Audit Information Management System, the BAI management set an ambitious goal of handling all the received audit information within the BAI and not tossing around the citizen requests to other government agencies. According to the BAI, the ratio of civil complaints transferred to other relevant government authorities has decreased significantly from around 40 percent to below 20 percent (figure 8), which was possible in part because of improved internal management and control under the new audit information management system, as well as the strong leadership shown by top management.

During 2016 and 2017, the BAI handled 19,560 audit information reports submitted by citizens. Among those, 144 cases (0.7 percent) resulted in audits; 1,787 cases (8.6 percent) resulted in a simple resolution or corrective measures that did not require full investigation; 6,026 cases (30.8 percent) resulted in closing after investigation (but without any material outcome); and 8,092 cases (41.4 percent) resulted in closing by decision because the complaint was ineligible or too trivial.

An encouraging note is that 144 audits were triggered by the audit information reports provided by citizens during 2016 and 2017 (box 2). But the outcomes also raise a concern about whether the limited BAI audit resources are well spent; more than 70 percent of the cases the BAI handled were closed without any concrete results after investigation or did not even necessitate an investigation. So far, the use of the online platform of the audit information management system appears to

FIGURE 8. Types of Civil Petitions and Complaints Processed by the Board of Audit and Inspection, 2013–17



BOX 2: Improvement of Service Delivery through Citizen's Voices

The Ministry of Health and Welfare (MOHW) of Korea has reinforced government's preventive health care initiative by introducing a reimbursable cancer screening test scheme and by extending the types of cancer screening tests that the public health insurance system supports. In 2016, a citizen petitioner submitted a complaint through the BAI website that the local public health center had not responded to her request to reimburse her reimbursable cancer screening test. The BAI found that the MOHW had not provided the reimbursement procedure to the local government after having recently changed the reimbursing agency from National Health Insurance Service (NHIS) to the local government public health center, an omission that resulted in MOHW's failing to reimburse ₩1.7 billion. The BAI recommended that the MOHW develop a standard reimbursement procedure for the public health centers across the country so that the local public health centers can provide the intended benefit of more timely and accurate reimbursement for the national health care users.

Source: BAI 2016, 572–73.

have been focused on improving convenience for the participating citizens and increasing efficiency in the BAI's handling of citizen participation, an effort that tackles the volume factor. The challenge for the BAI, therefore, is how to leverage the technological potential of ICT for removing more fundamental constraints on citizen participation. In other words, the challenge is how to leverage the ICT platform further so that the BAI may extract more publicly interested results from the audit information reports that are submitted by citizens and at the same time help those citizens become more considerate of social values or public issues beyond their own interests. The practice of CAAC's online administrative appeals hub system may provide some insight on this purpose.

In sum, the experience of the BAI confirms that the ICT platform is necessary to support expansion of citizen engagement, but the presence of the online platform itself does not automatically lead to citizen participation (Manroth and others 2014, 3).



Leveraging ICT Platforms for Protecting People's Rights and Interests against Government's Decisions: The Online Administrative Appeals Hub System of the Central Administrative Appeals Commission

In the accountability ecosystem other institutions such as anticorruption agencies, ombudsman institutions, and human rights commissions are also tasked with addressing shortcomings of the governmental checks-and-balances system, including by detecting and revealing mismanagement of public resources and any legal transgressions that may erode citizen rights and by monitoring state interventions and voicing citizen claims (Cornejo and Mendiburu 2015).

In the case of Korea these functions are entrusted to the Central Administrative Appeals Commission (CAAC), an affiliated institution of the Anti-Corruption and Civil Rights Commission (ACRC), which was established in 2008 by integrating three related functions, Ombudsman of Korea, Korea Independent Commission against Corruption, and Administrative Appeals Commission under the Prime Minister. The Administrative Appeals Commission under the Prime Minister was renamed the Central Administrative Appeals Commission in 2010.

Citizens in Korea, when affected by government decisions or inactions, can file an administrative appeal, which is the process of remedy by which an applicant asks the government agency to reconsider its decision when the rights or interests of the applicant have been infringed on by the agency's illegal or unfair actions or inaction. Article 1 of the Administrative Appeals Act stipulates that the purpose of administrative appeals is the protection of people's rights and interests and the control of the administration's decisions initiated by the people. Compared with

administrative litigation, the administrative appeals system also has binding effects, but it proceeds by documentary examination, it concludes quickly, and it requires no application fee, a system which suits the socially vulnerable groups in the country.

Administrative appeals are handled by commissions, which are collegiate bodies invested with the authority to deliberate and rule on adjudication requests by a majority vote of members who are present. The processing results have a binding effect on the administrative authorities. In order to ensure the objectivity and neutrality of the commission members, the commissions are composed of public officials and non-standing private sector members such as lawyers and professors. More than 70 administrative appeals commissions have been established to serve different geographical regions or specialized sectors since 1985 (ACRC 2018).

Although the system as organized seemed to provide the right channel for addressing citizen's needs, in practice it was not easy for members of socially vulnerable groups to argue against an improper decision of a government agency without professional assistance. It was very difficult or costly for citizens to make time from business hours to visit the agency office, a constraint that often compelled appellants to give up. In addition, often applications were rejected or referred to another commission because of the wrong jurisdiction or misdesignation of the relevant government agencies; such actions often led to a lost opportunity for administrative remedies to be exacted because the allowed time period had expired.

Thus a few years after its introduction, the administrative appeals were perceived as inaccessible and citizens started to rely on them less, with the number of applications remaining low and the acceptance rate generally declining in the early 2000s (see table 2). The processing time was also prolonged. In addition, the deviation in the acceptance rates for the same category of administrative appeals exceeded 50 percent among 17 city and provincial administrative appeals commissions. Simply put, the administrative appeals system was failing to fulfill the function of providing a remedy for the rights of the socially vulnerable (Choi 2003, 36–39).

Introducing ICT Tools to Foster the Use of the Administrative Appeal Remedy

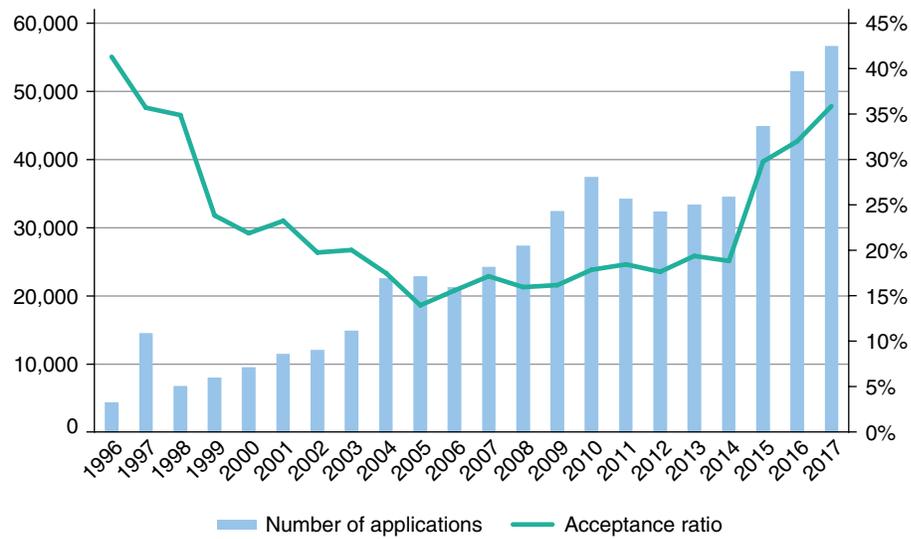
Against that backdrop, the online administrative appeals system was launched with the inauguration of participatory government in 2003. Functions for applicants of administrative appeals such as help with application writing, automatic inquiry responses, and self-checking of case processing progress became available through the Administrative Appeals Commission websites in 2006. In 2010, the legal basis for the online administrative appeals procedures through the electronic data processing was provided when the Administrative Appeals Act was amended.⁷

⁷ See appendix, "Provisions on Online Administrative Appeals, Excerpts from the Administrative Appeals Act."

TABLE 2. Trends of Administrative Appeals in the Early 2000s, 1996–2003

Year	Number of Applications	Decision after Hearing				Rate of Acceptance (%)	Withdrawal/Referral
		Total	Acceptance	Dismissal	Rejection		
1996	4,448	4,276	1,765	2,289	222	41.3	61
1997	14,598	14,370	5,123	8,723	524	35.7	169
1998	6,847	7,335	2,423	4,656	256	33.0	0
1999	8,032	8,065	2,066	5,590	400	25.6	67
2000	9,454	8,842	1,899	6,265	678	21.5	123
2001	11,317	12,246	2,889	8,620	737	23.6	110
2002	11,725	9,442	1,884	6,988	570	20.0	587
2003	13,859	13,164	2,500	10,028	636	19.0	269

FIGURE 9. Trends of Administrative Appeal Applications and Acceptance Rates, 1996–2017



In 2013, a project to build an online hub system to integrate more than 70 regional and sectoral administrative appeals commissions began, and that integrated system first provided service in 2014. The online administrative appeals hub system integrated as many as 63 administrative appeals commissions as of 2018.

The online administrative appeals hub system provides easy and convenient one-stop services to citizens through the Internet (figure 10). In this way, citizens are not constrained by time, place, and types of appeals. Furthermore, the administrative appeals commissions and their members and staff are provided with more systematic commission

FIGURE 10. Conceptual Diagram for the Online Hub for Administrative Appeals

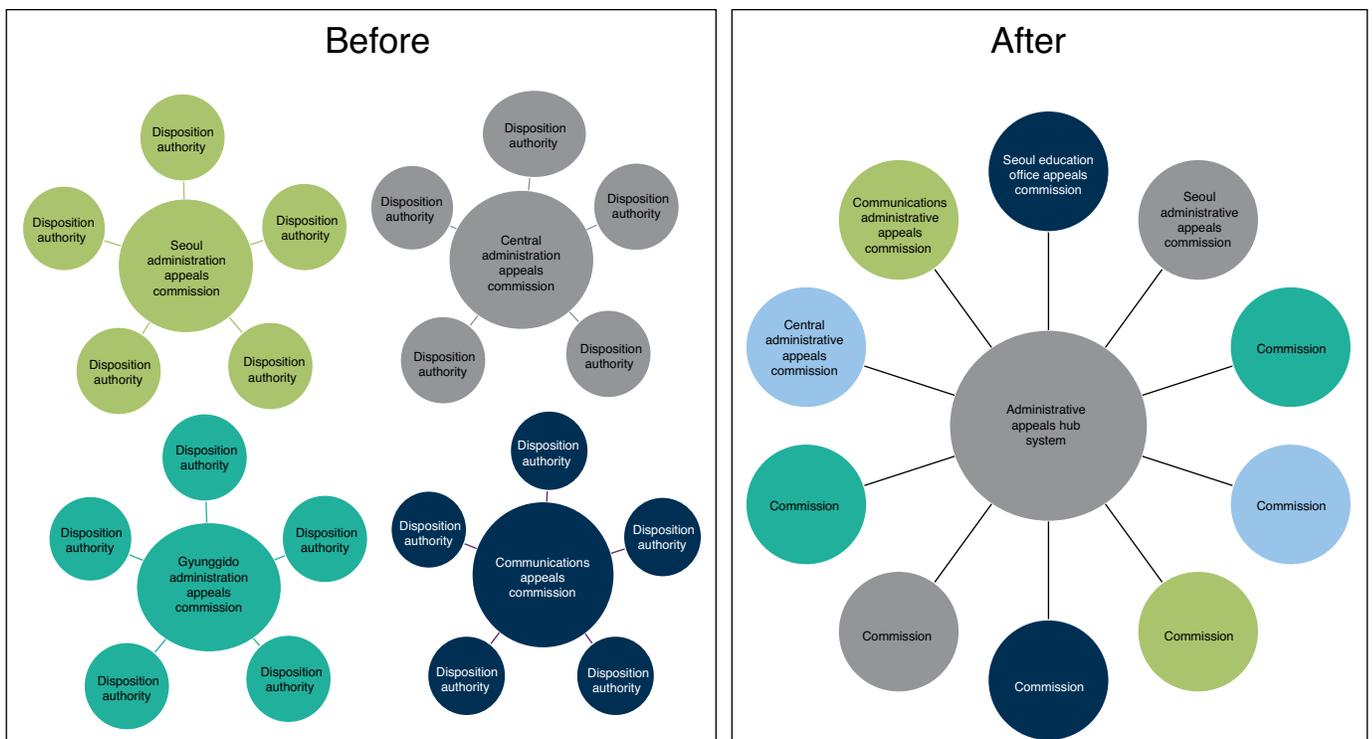


FIGURE 11. Procedure for Administrative Appeals



operation and consistency in adjudications through the use of the databases of those commissions.

Applicants can now access the adjudication records of the administrative appeals commission through an open application program interface service. They can also look up similar cases with the guided search function and predict how their appeals cases might end up, which may prevent unnecessary or excessive disputes from being filed.

In addition, the applicants can get custom help on how to write their cases and clear instructions on what procedure is next without having to visit the Administrative Appeals Commission offices.

The launch of the online administrative appeals hub system fundamentally changed how people perceived and used the administrative remedy to file complaints about violations of their rights. For citizens and especially socially vulnerable people, it helped increase their trust in the process because they could have access to information at any time and could start completing the application of appeals through the online system.

Power of Knowledge Management of Administrative Appeals Cases

The most important feature of the online administrative appeals hub system is that it provides services tailored to the needs of the parties at each step of the administrative appeal. The entire series of the review proceedings from all parties can be performed online in the administrative appeals hub system:

- a** an applicant (appellant) files an appeal;
- b** the respondent (agency) answers; and
- c** the commission reviews the arguments of both parties, decides who is right, reports its decision to both parties, and closes the case (figure 11).

Content Structuralization through Data Classification

In the past, administrative appeals were applied for and reviewed off-line. Each of the administrative appeals commissions accumulated information on the cases independently. Under the new hub system, all the administrative appeals cases are integrated and classified by

- a** field,
- b** type of agency's decision, and
- c** party to the administrative appeal.

The categorized data are sorted by the applicants, the commissions, and the government agencies, thereby making possible custom knowledge services based on this organized knowledge system. Accumulated appeals cases can be used effectively only when the data have been analyzed, systematically classified, and structured in the form of available knowledge (figure 12).

FIGURE 12. Features of Online Administrative Appeals Hub System



Customized Knowledge Services to Different Parties

The online administrative appeals hub system can provide its custom knowledge service to four types of data users:

- a** applicant (appellant),
- b** government agency,
- c** commission members and supporting staff, and
- d** citizenry (including researchers).

In particular, the online administrative appeals portal not only provides services tailored to the needs of citizens by providing them with full search functions, detailed search, search by type of agency's disposition, search by commission's decision, and search by best practice, but it also helps applicants, government agencies, and administrative appeals commissions to file applications, answer questions, and review cases by referring to similar cases. In addition, the online administrative appeals portal provides procedural information on the cases pending. After the case concludes, all the related data are, in turn, fed into the knowledge system of the online administrative appeals portal, adding value to the portal.

An applicant may obtain practical help while preparing an application from the "Assistant" function by looking up a pattern of similar cases for reference. For this feature, the data on the past cases of administrative appeals are analyzed through the knowledge classification system, and similar cases are grouped into the same category for easy reference. This method helps the citizens substantially overcome the difficulty of writing legal documents. The Assistant for Filling Out Application Form is a tool that helps the applicant by providing choices at each step of filling out an application form. An applicant may simply modify one of the similar examples with his or her own particular information.

In addition, as citizens other than applicants are given access to the cases of administrative appeals, they can become better informed and prevent future problems. In this way, the administrative appeals hub system can contribute to improving citizens' access to laws and institutions by providing helpful cases and relevant knowledge.

The online administrative appeals hub system also helps the administrative appeals commissions and government agencies (disposition-making agencies) reach rapid resolution of disputes by providing them with knowledge services. In addition, the government officials at the disposition-making agencies can use this knowledge service in their execution of laws and policies, thereby helping themselves work out a fairer and more equitable disposition. The administrative appeals commissions, too, can benefit from referring to the existing similar cases to maintain the consistency of their decisions on applications.

Achievements and Further Challenges of the Online Administrative Appeals Hub System

With the introduction of the online administrative appeals hub system, citizens can easily apply for an administrative appeal without the difficulties they suffered in the past. In fact, the share of online applications increased to 35.3 percent in 2017 from 15.9 percent in 2013. During the same period, the number of applications surged from 33,418 to 56,704 (see figure 9). With the government-wide hub system, the citizens can have better access to the administrative appeals system without concerns over functional and regional jurisdiction.

Improvement in processing administrative appeals through establishing standards and providing information led the commissions to reach a decision more quickly—by 6.17 days, or 8.5 percent faster, that is, from 72.76 days in 2013 to 66.59 days in 2015.⁸

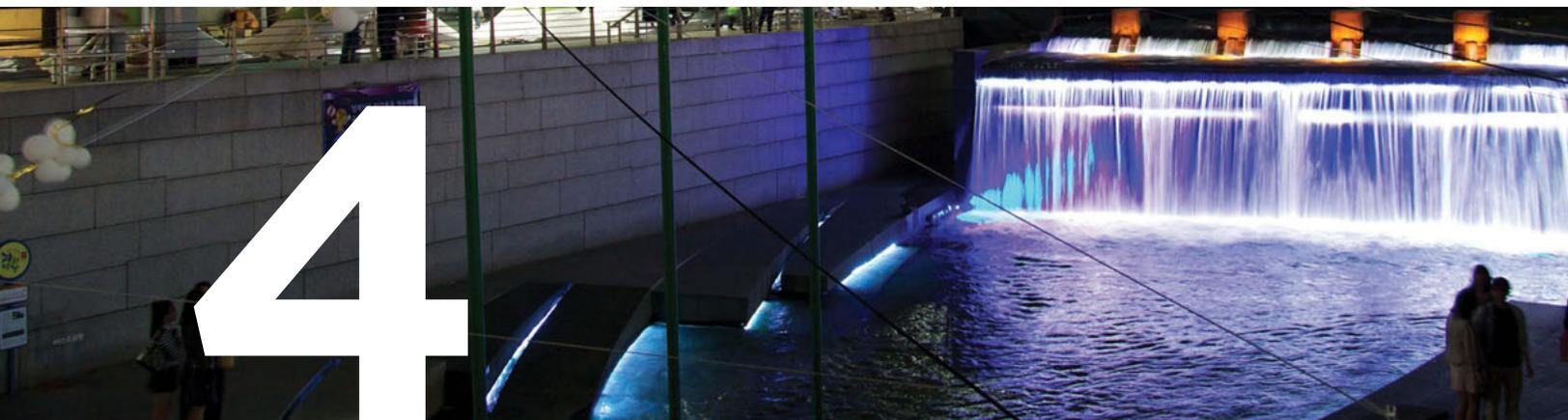
The online hub system has also played a decisive role in ensuring consistency in administrative appeals decisions, both at the individual and the entire administrative appeals commission level. As the decisions on administrative appeals began to be shared among the administrative appeals commissions in cities and provinces, the commission members could have access to professional knowledge needed for preliminary reviews. Notably, the variation in the rate of acceptance began to decrease for similar cases. The variation in the rate of acceptance

⁸ According to Article 45 of the Administrative Appeals Act, a ruling shall be made within 60 days from the date on which the commission has received a written appeal. The chairperson may extend the period for another 30 days ex officio if unavoidable circumstances exist.

among the administrative appeals commissions in cities and provinces was 50.2 percent in 2010 when the hub system for administrative appeals was not established, but it decreased to 37.8 percent in 2011–13 and 31.0 percent in 2015 (ACRC and CAAC 2015, 132). In addition, the quality of decisions, technical reviews, and answers improved accordingly.

The most far-flung effect of the online hub system may be its contribution to the predictability of public services from the release of the decisions and details of the cases to citizens. The hub system provides a precise search assistant that grasps the intention of the user and an education program on professional knowledge. And these values of the online administrative appeals system continuously expand because the quality of knowledge service with more sophisticated knowledge classification will be improved as more data are accumulated and used for the knowledge service.

However, as the number of applications surged by more than 10,000 cases in just two years, the average number of days for the commissions to reach a decision increased from 66.59 days in 2015 to 77.16 days in 2017. The ratio of cases whose ruling period exceeded the legal limit of 90 days reached 22.5 percent in 2017 (ACRC 2018, 392). The online application ratio has stagnated around 35 percent recently. These mixed outcomes can be explained by various reasons, such as insufficient outreach efforts to promote the new hub system, more complicated cases, lack of staff members to support the commission ruling, or lack of steady improvement of the ICT platform, such as upgrading knowledge classification by using more accumulated data. Another area of improvement would be to keep exploiting the latest advances in technology such as artificial intelligence technology. Introducing “chat-bots” may upgrade the current Assistant function in the online hub system to a completely different level.



Lessons Learned and Concluding Observations

Two practical examples were documented in this learning note on how ICT platforms have been leveraged to expand citizen engagement in public auditing and administrative appeals for enhanced public accountability in Korea. In the accountability process, citizens are the users of public services. Therefore, their individual grievances on government services carry valuable information on

- a** the quality of public service delivery,
- b** the performance of public organizations, and
- c** the integrity of public programs and their employees.

As can be seen from the Korean experiences, ICT offers a new path that has not existed in the physical or off-line world. It connects geographical points that have not been connected to one another and consolidates the connected places into one virtual place, regardless of distance. At this virtual place it is easier to collect and analyze the opinions from hundreds of thousands of people. With systematic classification of the collected data, the accumulated data become powerful knowledge. Many more and valuable insights and knowledge can be obtained by transforming mostly unstructured citizen engagement data into structured data with the help of systematic classification. The great volume of individual participation has been an essential feature of citizen engagement in public accountability, an attribute that can hinder the implementation of citizen engagement. The ICT platform, if it is complemented by off-line efforts, can be an efficient and effective solution to not only the volume problem (constraint to the implementation of citizen engagement) but also to the more difficult challenge of generating more social value from citizens' voices (constraint to the effects of citizen engagement). In addition, this solution can eventually contribute to closing the information and capacity gap between citizens and public authorities (constraint to de facto citizen empowerment).

BOX 3: Big Data Analysis for Citizen Complaints and Petitions

Korea's Anti-Corruption and Civil Rights Commission (ACRC) has set up a dedicated unit to conduct big data analysis and extract information on institutional improvements and risks from the accumulated civil petitions and complaints received through e-People. The ACRC has conducted preventive functions by offering such information and potential risks to the related government agencies. In 2017, 133 analysis reports were made and sent to the corresponding government agencies. Of those 133, as many as 74 recommendations were reflected in the work and policies of government. Furthermore, 48 recommendations or 36.1 percent of the analysis resulted in concrete institutional improvements.

Source: ACRC 2018, 100–111.

The big data analysis at the ACRC (box 3) shows another example of using the data from citizens' petitions and complaints processed by the ICT platform to improve public services by dealing with the root causes and not stopping at simply correcting mistakes.

Though the scope and speed of recent ICT advancements make it very difficult to derive a definite conclusion on whether it is indeed a success, and if it is, what the success factors are, the Korean experiences discussed provide the following lessons on how to leverage an ICT platform to expand citizen engagement in public accountability:

- ICT platforms or online tools do not replace the off-line resources for citizen participation in the public accountability process and, to the contrary, online and off-line measures are complementary with each other. As observed in both cases, lack of off-line resources may result in delayed response, which leads to unmet expectation and then distrust.
- A good number of people still do not know the benefits of the new ICT platform or prefer face-to-face consultation. Promotion of the new ICT system should not end as a one-time advertisement to inform the public of its launch. An outreach or communication strategy should be prepared in advance of the

BOX 4: Traditional Offline Approach in Digital Governance

The Tax Tribunal is one of the most frequently visited specialized administrative appeals commissions in Korea. Though the Tax Tribunal receives appeals applications through its website, it also requires that two sets of signed original application forms and evidential documents be submitted through the mail within three days of online submission. That is, the appeals filed through electronic data processing systems are not deemed filed by the Tax Tribunal. This is because Framework Act on National Taxes has not accepted electronic filing yet even though Administrative Appeals Act does explicitly.

Source: Kim and Kang 2017, 26–27.

launch and its implementation should be carried out continuously.

- The ICT platform should be introduced with reengineered processes and refreshed concepts. Those policies and procedures designed under the off-line environment often hinder or limit the full impact of ICT on expansion of citizen engagement (see box 4).
- Knowledge management is a very powerful tool for public accountability, and it has to be explicitly planned together with the development of the ICT platform. As more data from citizen participation are accumulated systematically and fed into the system, knowledge service can become more sophisticated and contextual, which establishes a virtual cycle.
- Practitioners in public accountability should have a clear vision on new technology. It is necessary to update on a regular basis, not only the ICT implementation plan but also the vision itself, if the full potential of the ICT platform is to be realized.
- Under this constantly changing environment of digital governance, we still may get one constant lesson: corresponding improvement of existing regulation and policy-making capability opens up more possibilities to leverage the ICT platform for citizen participation in public accountability.

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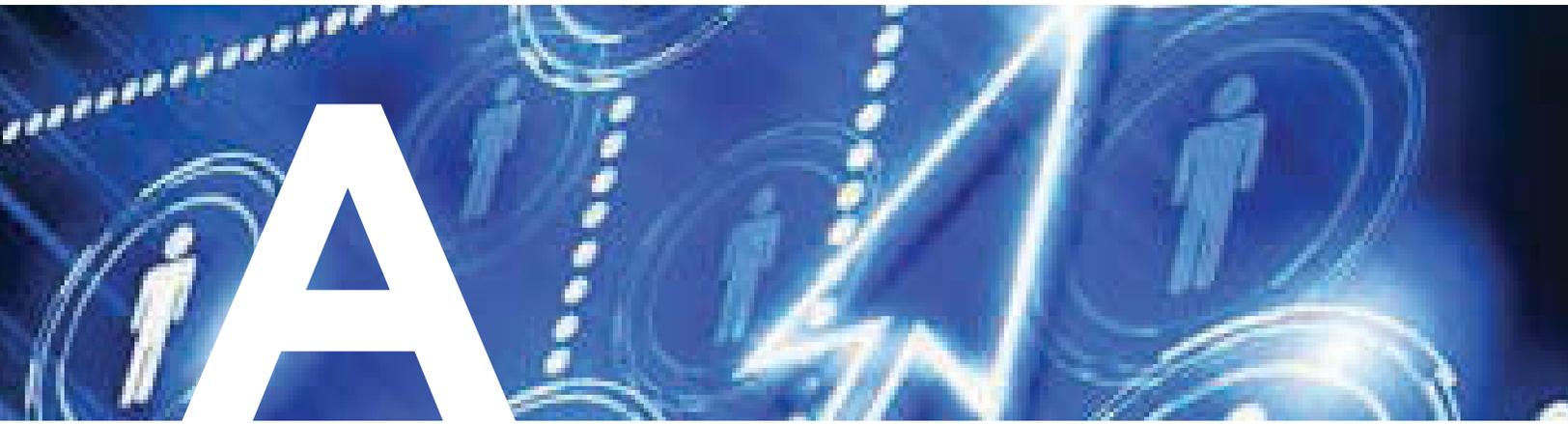
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Provisions on Online Administrative Appeals, Excerpts from the Administrative Appeals Act

Article 52 (Filing Appeal, etc., through Electronic Data Processing Systems)

1. A person who follows the administrative appeals procedure pursuant to this Act may prepare a written appeal and other documents in electronic format, and submit them using an information and communications network through an electronic data processing system (referring to an electronic device with data processing capability which is established through integrating computer hardware, software, database, network, security elements, etc., that allow a person to prepare, submit, and serve electronic documents necessary for an administrative appeals procedure; hereinafter the same shall apply) designated and operated by the commission.
2. The electronic documents submitted pursuant to paragraph (1) shall be deemed submitted in accordance with this Act, and the obligation to submit the copy thereof shall be exempted.
3. The electronic documents submitted pursuant to paragraph (1) shall be deemed received with the details recorded in an electronic data processing system as at the time a person who has submitted the documents confirms the receipt number provided by the electronic data processing system, through an information and communications network.
4. In cases of an appeal received through an electronic data processing system, when the period for filing an appeal is counted pursuant to Article 27, the appeal shall be deemed filed as at the time it is received under paragraph (3).
5. Matters necessary for the details of the designation of electronic data processing systems and the receipt of and handling with a written appeal, etc., through electronic data processing systems shall be prescribed by the National Assembly

Regulations, the Supreme Court Regulations, the Constitutional Court Regulations, the National Election Commission Regulations, or Presidential Decree.

Article 53 (Digital Signature, etc.)

1. The commission may request a person who intends to follow the administrative appeals procedures through an electronic data processing system, to present an official digital signature or other certification (hereafter in this Article referred to as “digital signature, etc.”) pursuant to Article 2 (3) of the Digital Signature Act that enables the identification of the person.
2. A person who put a digital signature, etc., pursuant to paragraph (1) of this Article is deemed to have affixed his/her signature or seal in accordance with this Act.
3. Matters necessary for digital signatures, etc., shall be prescribed by the National Assembly Regulations, the Supreme Court Regulations, the Constitutional Court Regulations, the National Election Commission Regulations, or Presidential Decree.

Article 54 (Service, etc., using Electronic Data Processing Systems)

1. An appellee or the commission may serve a person who has filed an administrative appeal pursuant to Article 52 (1) or who has intervened in an appeal with a written ruling or various documents under this Act using an electronic data processing system and its associated information and communications network: provided that this shall not apply if an appellant or an intervenor does not consent to the aforementioned service.
2. In the case of the main body of paragraph (1), the commission shall input and register documents, such as a written ruling to be served, in an electronic data processing system and then notify the fact that the document has been registered by an e-mail, etc., in accordance with the methods prescribed by the

National Assembly Regulations, the Supreme Court Regulations, the Constitutional Court Regulations, the National Election Commission Regulations, or Presidential Decree.

3. The service of a document through an electronic data processing system under paragraph (1) has the same effect as the one in writing.
4. The documents served pursuant to paragraph (1) are deemed to be received with the details recorded in an electronic information processing system, as at the time the appellant confirms the electronic documents registered under paragraph (2): provided that if such details are not confirmed within two weeks (within seven days for documents other than a written ruling) from the date of notification of registration under paragraph (2), the notice is deemed to have arrived on the date when two weeks (seven days for documents other than a written ruling) elapse from the date of notification of registration.
5. Articles 52 and 53 and this Article shall apply mutatis mutandis where a person who has filed an appeal or has intervened in an appeal in writing files an application for use of an electronic data processing system.
6. Articles 52 and 53 and this Article shall apply mutatis mutandis to the service of documents between the commission, an appellee, and other relevant administrative agencies.
7. A method of service pursuant to the main body of paragraph (1) or other necessary matters shall be prescribed by the National Assembly Regulations, the Supreme Court Regulations, the Constitutional Court Regulations, the National Election Commission Regulations, or Presidential Decree.

Source: Korean Legislation Research Institute. “Administrative Appeals Act” (Act No. 15025, Oct. 31, 2017). *Statutes of the Republic of Korea*, https://elaw.klri.re.kr/eng_service/main.do

