Preface

This book presents a developing countries' perspective on knowledge management (KM). It includes chapters from several regions including Asia, Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean. A number of developing countries, particularly small island states, have common problems that have affected their development and growth. If these issues can be addressed it would lead to significant improvement in economic development and growth. Knowledge management initiatives can be used to address some of these issues and so these developing countries need to understand what knowledge management initiatives are possible, how they can improve economic conditions, and what is needed to get them implemented so that the benefits they offer can be realized.

Developing countries often believe that only developed countries can provide high quality technological solutions. This intellectual colonization has restricted certain regions in seeking and using knowledge from countries other than those considered to be developed. For information and knowledge management the research has primarily focused on the developed world; however, the decision makers in these countries may not consider the local context and the societal norms; additionally, the proposed solutions may be costly. Many developing countries have access to technologies that can be used to assist in knowledge management. Therefore, effective knowledge management solutions must consider the context and technologies of developing countries. Relevant and low cost KM initiatives need to be considered in improving the existing KM processes in developing countries.

There is a need to identify KM strategies and technologies which can be applied to those areas that are critical to the growth of these developing countries such as after that sectors critical to the growth of developing countries include health care, agriculture, disaster recovery management, and small and medium size enterprise development. This book will highlight the opportunities in these sectors and provide advice as to how these countries should go about understanding, building, and adopting the relevant KM strategies and technologies.

This book is intended to serve diverse groups including academics, practitioners, and software developers in the field of knowledge management and the broader information systems community. For academics this book serves as teaching resource as it provides literature and case studies to assist lecturers teaching courses at both the undergraduate and graduate levels to clarify important concepts and issues related to knowledge management. The book also provides direction for future research by identifying sectors and technologies that can be further explored in different contexts both by academics and doctoral students. This book is also useful for practitioners as it highlights mechanisms of managing knowledge in various domains. Practitioners are often faced with an abundance of theoretical concepts and have a difficult time in explicating what could be applicable in a given situation. The studies presented in this book can provide them with guidance on how certain strategies and technologies could be applied. Some of the chapters have provided architectures and technologies which can be used to develop systems which can facilitate knowledge management. The software developers can use these in designing domain-specific knowledge management systems (KMS).

The contributed chapters are from various developing countries from across the continents; Mexico, Jamaica, other English-speaking Caribbean islands, Sub-Saharan African nations, South Africa, India, and Indonesia. The chapters include case studies and provide much needed insights on strategies and technologies in various domains which are of vital importance for development. The domains that the book focuses on are agriculture, education, disaster management, health care, and culture. Chapter 1 provides a brief overview of KM and KMS foundational concepts. Chapters 2, 3, and 4 focus on implementation of KM technologies in disaster management and agriculture in Mexico, Jamaica, and Sub-Saharan African countries. Chapters 5, 6, and 7 present studies which focus on mechanisms to improve existing KM capability in organizations, domains, and small developing countries by focusing either on technology or on knowledge sharing at a macro level. Chapters 8 and 9 focus on the need for and development of ontologies which are a vital component in the development and use of KMS. Case studies on knowledge sharing which is essential for KM initiatives in organizations and domains are presented in Chaps. 10, 11, and 12. These chapters discuss issues with knowledge sharing in developing countries across the globe, such as Jamaica, India, and Indonesia. Chapters 13 and 14 focus on community-focused initiatives which are essential for development and the importance of community leaders and community projects is highlighted. The chapters present a "lessons learnt" perspective in various domains and implementation details presented in them can easily be duplicated by similar sectors in other developing countries. Chapters 5, 6, 8, 9, and 13 can provide guidance in assisting knowledge management consultants in the developing countries to implement certain technologies to achieve their KM goals.

Richmond, VA   Kweku-Muata Osei-Bryson
Mona Campus, Jamaica   Gunjan Mansingh
                                                                                   Lila Rao

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Osei-Bryson, K.-M.; Mansingh, G.; Rao, L. (Eds.)