**UNIVERSITY OF COLOMBO, SRI LANKA**

**UNIVERSITY OF COLOMBO SCHOOL OF COMPUTING**

**DEGREE OF BACHELOR OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (EXTERNAL)**
*Academic Year 2008/2009 – 2ⁿᵈ Year Examination – Semester 4*

*IT4203:* **IT Project Management**

*CASE STUDY*

No. of Pages = 2

### Census Modernization Project (CMP)

The case of a Census Modernization Project offers a classic example of an ambitious Information Technology project. When the Department of Census unveiled the project, the idea was to arm its field census enumerators with high-tech handheld devices which could directly capture and transmit the population information to the Department as they collect the relevant information from the population. Census officials signed a 300 million contract with ABC Corporation to build 250,000 handheld devices, but they were not sure which features they wanted included in the units. What they did know was that this project would cost at least 2 billion in total. Though there were no detailed projections, they assured the public that the handheld devices were sure to save the Department a considerable amount of time and money.

The ABC corporation reported that since it signed on with the Department of Census, it received over 400 change requests to project requirements. Out of many who bid for the project, ABC Corporation's bid was the lowest, and the tender evaluation committee selected the lowest bid to award the project without taking into consideration their previous experience or the competency of the project team. ABC Corporation itself had staff problems during and before the project with high staff turn-over. To top it all, the project manager himself was not available to work on the project due to a brief illness and had to be replaced by a new project manager who did not have the necessary experience to guide a project of this nature.

Last year after the initiation of the project, the handheld project was in shambles. In April, the Department head sent a press release announcing that it was significantly reducing the role of the handhelds in the next Census efforts. After spending hundreds of millions of taxpayer money, the census enumerators were for the most part going back to the old-fashioned pen or pencil and paper method.

Part of the reason the Department scrapped the project was the subsequent cost overruns which were going to be necessary to get the full project off ground given the midstream requirements changes. What is worse, even as census enumerators were relegated back to the paper age, the total cost of census estimates rose by billions.

According to a report by the Government Audit, the units which were tested out in the field in the previous year were regularly experiencing problems with "transmission, device freezing, map spotting (collecting mapping coordinates) and difficulties working with large blocks." Service levels were not acceptable and enumerators complained that it was taking too long to perform routine tasks. The project team had not accurately determined the load.

*************