



Division for Public Administration
and Development Management
(DPADM/UNDESA)



United
Nations Public
Administration Network



United Nations Economic I
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(UNECA)

A I D E M E M O I R E

E/M-GOVERNMENT DEVELOPMENT IN AFRICA: Progress Made and Challenges Ahead February 17-19, 2009, Ethiopia

I. Background

In today's technology-driven globalized world, governments are increasingly becoming aware of the importance and role of e-government and ICT in development. Many countries are adapting their public sector systems in accordance with the changing environment, realizing the importance of e-government readiness and e-governance in improving public service delivery to citizens. As IT applications, especially innovative e-government programs are employed as part of the public sector reform, the governments are taking note of the synergy from the interaction between new technologies, an educated population, and an enabling environment and the potential offered by innovative indigenous application of the information and communication technologies (ICTs) to intractable local development problems. There is recognition in many developing countries to integrate technology into development planning so that more effective and speedy solutions can be found to the delivery of basic services. Policy makers now fully realize that ICT can effectively contribute to the enabling environment for development, create job opportunities, improve health and education and enhance transparency, accountability and good governance. By putting ICT as the center piece of development, countries can effectively support their economic and social development goals.

Although many African governments are seeking to develop the essential economic and frameworks for the development of ICT, some find it difficult to divert scarce resources towards promoting indigenous capacities when faced with pressing priorities of reducing poverty; providing health and education; and maintaining sustainable economic growth. The UN E-government Survey 2008, which ranks countries according to their e-government readiness, finds that of all the regions, Africa is the least e-ready in the world. The lack of technical skills and policy building capacity is one of the key barriers to effective e-government, e-participation and service delivery by the public sector. With scarce resources, many countries need capacity building and upgradation of indigenous technical skills in order to plan, formulate and implement ICT programs at the national and regional levels.

There is a need to support African countries to build national capacities in electronic and mobile government by providing information and tools for the development of comprehensive e/m-government policies and programmes in support of public sector development.

The Division of Public Administration & Knowledge Management (DPADM) in the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) is often the repository of requests from its Member States to support their efforts through a focused program of awareness raising, capacity building and training in e/m-government for development.

DPADM is also home to the UN Secretariat E-government Program. The United Nations' work in the area of e/m government reflects the trust it enjoys from national governments due to the legitimacy that comes with being the impartial and world body. As a result, DPADM is often invited by the Member States to promote technology awareness; capacity building and training; and to provide advisory services in e/m-government and ICT for development. It disseminates its e/m-government work through the extensive reach of its United Nations Online Network in Public Administration and Finance (UNPAN) which plays an important role in information and knowledge sharing and capacity building on e/m-government around the world.

As part of its effort to further support the e/m-government efforts of the Member States, the Knowledge Management Branch of DPADM is working towards the establishment of a ***UN Global Knowledge Repository on Electronic and Mobile Government (UN GKR)*** which will address major shortcomings in electronic and mobile government research and knowledge transfer.

The UN GKR is initiated by UNDESA in response to member countries interest in enhancing knowledge management on e-government issues. UN GKR will establish mechanisms for knowledge sharing and resource development on e/m government including the sharing of data, resources, best practices, and establishment of consistent and reliable leading indicators for effective e/m government. To reach this ambitious goal, the UNDESA/DPADM will build partnerships with regional commission, undertake joint workshops in all regions and establish networks that will provide a sustainable institutional knowledge base for the UN Global EM-GKR.

II. The UN EM-GKR in Africa

The UN EM-GKR in Africa will support ongoing e/m-government development in Africa by providing information and resources in support of e/m government policies and programs in the region. To further the parameters of the ongoing work of UNGKR in Africa, UNDESA/DPADM will work in close partnership with UNECA/Division for the ICT, Science and Technology Division (ISTD). The UNECA/ISTD over 20 years has developed and implemented an extensive work programme on e-government development in Africa.. The African Information Society Initiative (AISI), which was adopted by African Conference of Ministers in May 1996, is the continental blueprint for supporting a digital agenda on for Africa. It includes support for the use of ICTs in government. The e-government agenda of the AISI is under the ICT4D Policy framework, known as the National Information and Communication Infrastructure Plans (NICI). ECA has also commissioned studies in examining the role and impact of mobile telephony in the delivery of services, as well as in economic activities. In the year 2007 UNECA/ISTD launched the Technology in Government in Africa Awards (TIGA) to recognize the work of African Governments in the effective use of ICTs for public services delivery (http://www.uneca.org/eca_programmes/it_for_development/default.htm), which has become part of developing a best practices observatory. Therefore, the UNECA/ISTD is ideally placed to be the African regional node for UN-Africa-EM-GKR's work

The UNDESA/DPADM in partnership with UNECA/ISTD will hold a three day Capacity Development Workshop entitled “e/m-Government in Africa, Progress Made and Challenges Ahead” in Ethiopia in February 17-19, 2009

The UN Capacity Development Workshop will review and analyze approaches and best practices in understanding e/m government development in Africa, to assess issues and challenges facing countries as they advance in developing their e/m government programmes, and to contribute to the achievement of the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The workshop will focus on the transfer and exchange of ideas among multi-stakeholders on effective e/m government development. It will also provide an opportunity to bring together a multidisciplinary group of African policy makers, experts and researchers to further evolve the framework for the UN Global Knowledge Repository on e/m-Government in Africa.

III. Objectives

The goal of the Workshop is to explore regional knowledge into the issues and challenges of e/m government development in Africa, further the thinking of the United Nations on the development of the UN Global Knowledge Repository, develop partnerships for capacity building in the region and identify capacity building needs for e/m government in the region.

The experts will present papers on the themes outlined above, as well as participate in the discussions at the Workshop, which has the following objectives:

- review current research, including concepts and approaches of e/m government in Africa and explore the challenges and barriers to e/m government development;
- map innovative practices of e/m government development citing best practices and lessons learnt;
- facilitate an active dialogue between the UN and the various regional stakeholders to forge the boundaries of a framework of assessment on e/m government development in Africa;
- provide training on e-knowledge management on the development of the UN Global Knowledge Repository for Africa through the UNPAN tools;
- forge partnerships for the future work on the UN Global Knowledge Repository in Africa; and
- promote regional cooperation and the regional perspective in e/m-government development, through discussions and presentations regarding the fundamentals of the enabling environment.

IV. Output

The Workshop papers and discussions will lead to a capacity development material on the issues of e/m government and capacity development needs in Africa. Networks and partnerships will be built amongst the participants as well as UN agencies.

V. Proposed programme

- The three-day capacity development workshop on *e/m-Government in Africa: Progress Made and Challenges Ahead* will commence on February 17-19th, 2009. The agenda will include *five* sessions over three days on the selected topics related electronic and mobile government in Africa. Each session will include presentations followed by general discussions. Thematic areas for presentation include the following:

- *Session I: E/M government: An Overview*
- *Session II: e/m-Government issues and challenges in Africa*
- *Session III: Capacity Building for E/M government in Africa: Issues and Needs*
- *Session IV: Country best practices and lessons learned*
- *Session V: Capacity Building for e/m-Government in Africa: The UN Global Knowledge Repository through the UNPAN tools*

VI. Participants

Participants at the Workshop will include senior policy makers, practitioners and experts on e/m government initiatives, and representatives from African countries, the Africa-UNPAN member institutions, the academia, the private sector as well as representatives of regional and international organizations involved in e-government development in Africa.

VII. Organization and management

The Workshop will be conducted in English and French. All documents and papers presented at the Workshop will subsequently be posted at UNDESA and UNECA respective web links <http://www.unpan.org> and <http://www.uneca.org/aisi/>

VII. Venue

The United Nations Economic Commission for Africa
Addis Ababa,
Ethiopia