United Nations | Department of Economic and Social Affairs

United Nations Economic Commission for Africa

2022 United Nations E-Government Survey
The Future of Digital Government

Africa Regional Workshop

Date: 14 Oct 2022

Digital technology is increasingly blurring the lines between the physical, digital and biological spheres and is rapidly changing the way people live, work and communicate. The public sector is a case in point; in terms of policies, institutions, strategies and tools, there is no longer a clear distinction or separation between government and e-government.

With the evolution of digital government, public administrations and institutions around the globe have been irreversibly transformed—both structurally and in terms of the dynamic between Governments and the people they serve. These observations draw from two decades of analytical research and the monitoring of trends within the framework of the United Nations E-Government Survey.

While nearly every country is engaged in the process of digitalization, not all have achieved the same level of development, and while institutions at all levels are committed to modernization and digital transformation, approaches and outcomes vary greatly. Not all countries are able to achieve the same sustainable development gains through e-government development, and the benefits to communities and vulnerable segments of the population have been disproportionate and uneven. The COVID-19 pandemic has further exposed e-government divides between and within countries at the regional, national and local levels.

The United Nations E-Government Survey, a biennial publication of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA), was conceived and continues to be recognized as a valuable measurement and development tool, serving as both a monitoring mechanism and a guiding framework for public sector digitalization. The twelfth edition of the Survey offers further evidence of the ongoing shift from the traditional technocratic e-government approach of the early 2000s to a digital development agenda that is policy oriented, data-centric and politically driven, and it further illustrates how e-government has expanded and evolved from siloed approaches in a handful of high-income countries to whole-of-government and whole-of-society approaches in virtually all countries around the globe. In a very real sense, digitalization is redefining and transforming the way Governments operate.

The COVID-19 pandemic has constituted a litmus test of sorts for Governments around the world. It has forced Governments to rethink the role of the State and has compelled them to develop digital solutions to ensure the continuity of public services and societal stability—often taking them outside the scope of existing policies and regulations. It has tested the responsiveness, agility and digital resilience of Governments, providing opportunities to strengthen multilevel governance across regional and local jurisdictions and to extend the provision of information and services to all segments of society, including micro, small and medium-sized enterprises and vulnerable populations, to ensure

that no one is left behind in the hybrid digital society. There have been successes and setbacks, and the pace of progress has varied from one country to another, but overall e-government development trends remain positive and encouraging.

The first three chapters of the present Survey explore global, regional and local e-government trends, with development assessments based on the tested and accepted e-government development index (EGDI) methodology. The fourth chapter focuses on leaving no one behind in the hybrid digital society, highlighting the importance of e-participation and open government data. The final chapter examines key trends and innovations that are expected to drive the future of digital government for sustainable development.

Digital government has reached a critical point. It is no longer a stand-alone or auxiliary tool, nor does it represent a panacea for government deficiencies or inefficiencies; it should be seen as an integral and thoroughly integrated aspect of the physical functioning of public institutions and services delivery. Digital development is inexorable, and inaction or the wrong action can be costly (in terms of missed economic and social development opportunities) and deepen risks (in particular those linked to cybersecurity and privacy issues).

With the acceleration of e-government development and the social and economic recovery efforts being undertaken in the post-COVID period, this is an opportune time to activate the priorities highlighted by the Secretary-General in the "Roadmap for digital cooperation" and Our Common Agenda, strengthening inclusion, equity and engagement through the provision of anticipatory/predictive and people-centred services and through enhanced digital cooperation with the private sector and diverse stakeholder groups. It is imperative that digital government—including e-services and e-participation—be set up in a way that strengthens rather than undermines trust in Governments and public institutions.

Digital Government in Africa

Country	Rating class	EGDI rank	Subregion	OSI value	HCI value	TII value	EGDI (2022)	EGDI (2020)
South Africa	HV	65	Southern Africa	0.7487	0.7733	0.6850	0.7357	0.6891
Mauritius	HV	75	Eastern Africa	0.6282	0.7733	0.7588	0.7201	0.7196
Seychelles	H3	85	Eastern Africa	0.4424	0.7758	0.8198	0.6793	0.6920
Tunisia	H3	88	Northern Africa	0.6031	0.6911	0.6646	0.6530	0.6526
Morocco	H2	101	Northern Africa	0.4721	0.6350	0.6676	0.5915	0.5729
Egypt	H2	103	Northern Africa	0.5730	0.6375	0.5579	0.5895	0.5527
Ghana	H2	106	Western Africa	0.5361	0.6176	0.5934	0.5824	0.5960
Cabo Verde	H2	110	Western Africa	0.4965	0.6507	0.5507	0.5660	0.5604
Algeria	H2	112	Northern Africa	0.3743	0.6956	0.6133	0.5611	0.5173
Kenya	H2	113	Eastern Africa	0.6821	0.5641	0.4305	0.5589	0.5326
Gabon	H2	116	Middle Africa	0.3578	0.6706	0.6279	0.5521	0.5401
Botswana	H1	118	Southern Africa	0.2740	0.6932	0.6814	0.5495	0.5383
*Rwanda**	H1	119	Eastern Africa	0.7935	0.5322	0.3209	0.5489	0.4789
*Côte d'Ivoire**	H1	120	Western Africa	0.5467	0.5748	0.5186	0.5467	0.4457
Namibia	H1	121	Southern Africa	0.4316	0.6516	0.5133	0.5322	0.5747
*Zambia**	H1	131	Eastern Africa	0.4414	0.6744	0.3909	0.5022	0.4242

Sources: 2020 and 2022 United Nations E-Government Surveys.

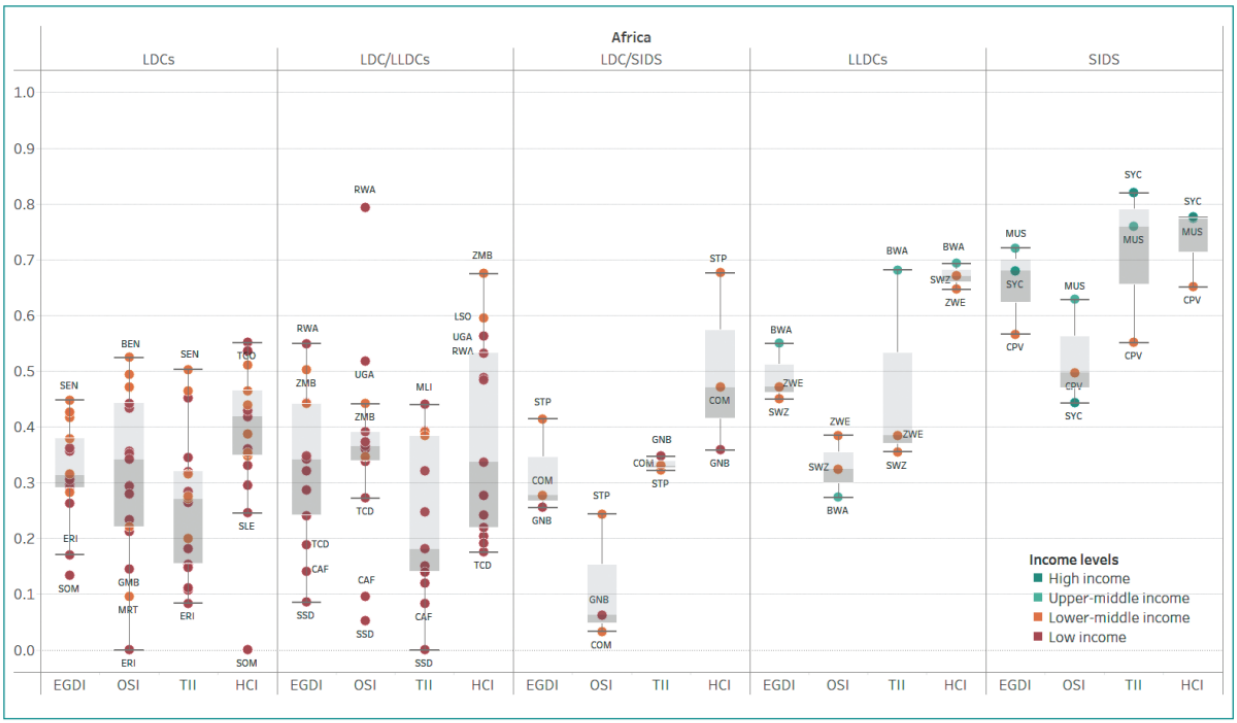
Note: Countries in italics are LDCs, LLDCs or SIDS.

* Countries that moved from the middle to the high EGDI group in 2022.

Table 2.1 displays the key Survey results for the 16 countries in Africa with the highest EGDI values in 2022. These countries are in the high EGDI group and, in descending order, are further divided into HV, H3, H2 and H1 rating classes. Consistent with the previous two Surveys, only four countries (Mauritius, Seychelles, South Africa and Tunisia) are among the top 100 countries in terms of overall EGDI ranking, with values above the global average of 0.6102.

Digitalization trends in Africa are positive overall. Fixed (wired) broadband subscriptions have jumped 48 per cent since 2020, rising from 1.80 to 2.67 per 100 inhabitants. Survey results for 2022 indicate that 33 per cent of the region's residents use the Internet, 42.8 per cent are active mobile broadband subscribers, and 83.7 per cent have mobile cellular telephone subscriptions. Nevertheless, the values for these indicators remain below the corresponding global averages, and the cost of mobile broadband subscriptions as a percentage of gross national income per capita remains significantly higher in Africa than in other parts of the world, contributing to the digital divide.

Africa faces persistent challenges linked to inadequate investment in e-government development. Low-income and lower-middle-income countries make up 85 per cent of the regional total, and two thirds of these countries are LDCs, LLDCs and/or SIDS. Africa is home to 39 of the 91 countries in special situations worldwide. The lowest EGDI and subindex values are found among the LDCs, including those that are also LLDCs and SIDS; the average EGDI value for this group is 0.3233. Among the LLDCs, Botswana has the highest TII value (0.6814) but the lowest OSI value (0.2740). The SIDS in Africa have an average EGDI value of 0.3872; Mauritius has the highest OSI value, and Seychelles has the top TII value.



Source: 2022 United Nations E-Government Survey.

Notes: Countries in special situations include least developed countries (LDCs), landlocked developing countries (LLDCs), and small island developing States (SIDS). The internationally recognized three-letter country codes can be found here and in Survey annex table 12.

Objective

The primary objective of this side event is to bring delegates, government officials, experts, practioners and other stakeholders, to discuss how governments can tap on digital technologies for

building inclusive, resilient and sustainable societies, and ensuring social inclusion and leaving no one behind. It aims to allow a joint reflection and dialogue based on the analytical findings and recommendations of the 2022 E-Government Survey. It is expected that the discussion outcomes would be connected to prior and future, and both UN and non-UN, fora/events on similar subject of digital government and e-resilience. Guiding questions are as follow:

- What are the current global and regional trends of digital government development? How similar or different are the trends in the Africa region?
- What would it take to mobilize transformative potentials of digital government to build inclusive, resilient and sustainable societies, including the managing the COVID-19 pandemic and support recovery? What are the opportunities, risks and challenges moving forward especially in context of the Africa region?

Programme

Date/Time: 14 October 2022 from 11:30 to 12:30
Venue: (tbc)

Organizers

The event is co-organized by (i) Division for Public Institutions and Digital Government (DPIDG), UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) and United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Africa (UNECA)