Framework for e-governance in UNDP

At UNDP, *democratic governance* is central to achieving sustainable human development. UNDP thus provide significant support to efforts on the ground that address governance challenges and advance governance that is marked by *inclusive participation*. Access to information and e-governance were reflected in the previous Strategic Plan (2008-2013) of UNDP as key pillars of our work on Inclusive Participation.

By the end of 2012, UNDP was supporting 217 active e-governance projects in 89 countries. The estimated overall expenditure for these projects, including regional and global programmes, amounted to **US$216.45 million**.

Excluding an outlier e-service delivery project in Argentina (national registration project) which alone had an expenditure of $88 million, the total expenditure for e-governance in 2012 is approximately $128.5 million, and e-administration, rather than e-service delivery, has the highest expenditures at $65 million (50% of the total), while e-services account for 16 percent of expenditures ($20.8 million), followed by e-participation for $20.6 million (nearly 10%), access and connectivity for $10.5 million (5%) and access to information for $6 million (nearly 3%). Finally, investments in policy and regulation accounted for $5.1 million (just over 2%).

The rapid diffusion of ICTs has transformed governance for good. Government’s ability to execute and deliver on its roles and functions has certainly been enhanced significantly by the digital revolution; and, people are now more able to participate in public decision-making processes, to connect and mobilize, to influence government, and to hold government to account.

By the strategic use of ICTs (*old and new*), UNDP advances the use of appropriate ICTs to promote democratic governance both in its foundations (inclusive political processes giving voice to the poor and marginalized, systems of accountability and integrity, empowerment of civil society to shape and influence public decisions, and respect for human rights) and in its ability to deliver tangible development dividends to the population (through an effective and responsive public administration at central and sub-national levels and accessible and affordable access to justice and citizen security for all).

UNDP efforts therefore are not so much about innovative technology but innovative governance enabled by **strategic use of ICTs as means to an end - not ends in themselves**.

In a nutshell, UNDP’s e-governance approach has three main objectives:

- Increase the efficiency, transparency and accountability of public institutions.
• Enhance information access and provision of basic services to the overall population, in particular the poor and most vulnerable - thus linking to the MDGs.
• Promote people's participation, particularly the poor, women and youth, in decision and policy making processes.

Core components
UNDP has identified six e-governance components, as follows:
• e-administration: Foster transparency and accountability within national and local public institutions, to improve their functioning and effectiveness.
• e-service delivery: Foster the delivery of public services to all.
• e-participation: Foster interaction between public institutions and citizens to promote better policies, services and public operations. This has three levels: information provision to citizens, consultation with citizens, and dialogue between government and citizens. This component is usually linked to voice and accountability, civil society strengthening, and parliamentary development among others.

These components are inter-linked. For example, if a public institution prioritizes ICT investment in service delivery, the required backend systems and internal organization and administration need to be addressed too in order to be able to achieve the final goals.

Cross-cutting components
This set of components are relevant to any e-governance initiative or programme but are not unique to e-governance. They include:
• Policy environment and regulation: Support the creation and implementation of ICTD and e-governance policies, legislation and regulation as well as to build the internal institutional capacities of the public entities involved in policy design, implementation and oversight. In principle, such policies should be closely related to broader national development goals.
• Access to ICT and connectivity: Public and private information infrastructure, connectivity and equipment to foster wider use by people. Examples include telecenters or public Internet access points.
• Access to Information: Promote the digitization and dissemination of public information among the overall population. It is closely linked to the broader field of access to information, which in UNDP parlance includes promoting the creation of national legislation such as ‘freedom of information acts’.

Exemples of UNDP efforts on the ground

1. Demand-driven service delivery

• Of the many roles and functions of government, the ability to deliver basic services to as many people as possible in the most efficient and effective way is among the most critical, and continues to be one of the most challenging. It is particularly so for countries with limited resources, with capacities that are constantly strained, and facing a range of vulnerabilities (conflict, natural disasters, etc.).
In this context, it becomes even more imperative that the use of ICTs to enhance delivery of public services are focused on those needed most, and reach people who are most in need. Efforts here help directly address critical development gaps; they also enhance efficiency and transparency of public institutions. For example:

- In Kyrgyzstan we have helped to link medical stations in remote areas with limited capacities and services to the country’s main hospital in the capital where medical equipment and medical expertise are located. Medical diagnostic and informational-communicational equipment and software make it possible for doctors and medical experts at the main hospital to “talk” to health workers at the local communities, conduct medical diagnostics across the distance, and provide life-saving information as well as prescription services without the need for villagers in remote areas to travel to the capital.

- In Bangladesh, UNDP has been supporting since 2006, a comprehensive Access to Information programme to create favourable ground for effective ICT programming. It started with a series of surveys and studies that included the e-Governance Horizon Scan Report in 2007 and policy-envisioning documents in education, health, agriculture and local government. The programme also established a core group of ICT ‘champions’ in all the major agencies of government and designed and developed e-governance ‘driver’ projects and ‘enabling environment’ projects. Then, in 2009, the A2I programme began supporting the government’s national e-governance initiative called Digital Bangladesh, as the foundation for long-term development platform for the country. The A2I programme and its support for Digital Bangladesh has since become a pillar of UNDP’s work in the country. Digital Bangladesh and the A2I programme are both run from the Office of the Prime Minister, giving them high public status and almost daily press coverage. Given that the priorities of Digital Bangladesh are aligned with UNDP’s pro-poor policy goals for enhancing access to information and improving the delivery of basic services, the A2I programme is progressively meeting UNDP’s overall pro-poor policy goals. See https://www.undpe.gov.org/featured/Bangladesh

2. Enhancing the effectiveness of public institutions

- Improving operations and processes across government agencies using ICTs, or e-administration, is best understood by many as “modernization” efforts. Indeed, many developing countries need to “upgrade” their tools to improve functioning and to improve their ability to serve their people. This area thus focuses on retooling of or the acquisition of new ICTs to bring government systems and platforms up-to-date. At the core of these “modernization” efforts is the broader goal of not just improving government efficiency and effectiveness but also enhancing accountability and transparency of public institutions.

- This is one area where a significant amount of public investments many be noted because projects of this type typically involve infrastructures (hardware and software components) that carry significant costs. These efforts can be considered as a way to build more capable public institutions, by improving “the way they do things” through
ICTs. We need however to ensure that we do not think of improved or state-of-the-art systems as an end in and of themselves but rather as the means to achieve the broader goals of development. To illustrate:

- UNDP’s support to Capacity Building through ICTs in Eritrea helped the Ministry of Justice to strengthen its human and institutional capacity through the provision of various computer-based court systems and training programmes that enhanced not just the Ministry itself but the justice system of the country overall. The enhancement of service delivery has in turn improved public satisfaction, and the Ministry is seen to be better able to provide quality, fair, efficient and accountable judicial services. The programme helped establish a case flow management system that enabled effective supervision of cases, an inventory system and database to enable efficient tracking and transparent information/documentation bank, various access and connectivity materiel, facilitated integration of the work of different branches, and training to enhance human capacities.

- In Jordan, ICT had been identified by the government as a crucial enabler for social and economic development. The UNDP-supported e-procurement and e-accounting projects had been pointed to as one examples of this. The projects included a review and evaluation of the government’s procurement processes and practices and the development of an e-procurement pilot, which improves government functioning and diminishes opportunities for corruption.

- UNDP has been supporting the modernization of the Costa Rican Social Security Agency (CCSS) to tackle cost and efficiency issues through the use of free/open source software (FOSS) and fostering a culture of innovation within the institution. Despite endorsement by CCSS’s Board of Directors, there is some internal resistance from CCSS staff to some of the recommendations, particularly from the IT division. UNDP has in turn recommended that CCSS creates a temporary “innovation” unit which will have a multi-disciplinary character and experiment with open source software to raise awareness and familiarity of IT staff with the tools.

3. Enhancing participation in public processes (critical to democratic governance)

- Inclusive participation is one of the core pillars of democratic governance, and UNDP advances democratic governance itself as critical in pro-poor development. The participation of people, as individual members of society and as groups working together towards common goals, are essential in ensuring that they have a say in public processes where decisions affecting their lives are made.

- ICTs present new ways and opportunities for enabling and expanding people’s participation in the public sphere. With the help of ICTs, people who have been traditionally marginalized can be a part of the public dialogue and “have a seat at the table” even when living in remote areas far away the centers of government. New ICTs, especially mobile phones that are now in the hands of six billion across the world (including the poor in remote areas), present new opportunities for people to engage with their government and gain access to political and policy decision-making processes.
ICTs have democratized access to information spaces for engagement. Anyone can now publish information on the web and the information can be accessed by anyone with an Internet or mobile connection. Anyone can also be source and generator of information through SMS/text messaging, and have capacity to connect with a wider population at little cost, to mobilize, and to network for collective action. Mobile phones and other new ICTs such as the internet and social media have opened the possibility for quickly spreading information, enabling and fostering dialogue, and influencing policy and decision-makers. Examples of UNDP efforts:

- Since 2007, the Khoun Community Radio Support Project in the Lao People’s Democratic Republic has been helping enhance the opportunities by people who have been traditionally marginalized to access information and enable them to have a voice in public processes. Through the Khoun Community Radio Support Project, more people especially in remote rural areas, people from ethnic and vulnerable groups (particularly women), were able to engage with one another and share information that are relevant to their own communities using their own language. UNDP made sure that attention was given to encouraging women to participate; including encouraging women to apply for positions in the project team itself (half of the volunteer broadcasters in the radio station are in fact women).

- In Madagascar, UNDP supported a programme called “the Wisdom of the Crowds”, which or harnessed the power and reach of mobile technologies to collect and process the views and aspirations of young people in Madagascar, enabling them to have a voice in policies and development strategies that govern their future. Working in collaboration with three major telecom operators, the project has registered around 43,000 youth who have submitted their opinions on several key topics via SMS which has in turn informed policy-making and generated awareness around issues affecting the lives of youth. Results: Eighteen percent of Madagascar’s youth participated in the test phase and 43,000 youth registered to share their views.

- In Liberia, UNDP has supported since 2005 a project in that focuses on a radio call-in programme called “Know Your Law Makers.” Broadcast by UNMIL, the official radio station of the United Nations in Liberia, the project aims to involve people directly in governance processes by facilitating a constructive dialogue between them and their elected representatives and government officials. This engagement is particularly significant given the effects of the 14-year civil war in the country, which was in large part due to deep ethnic and socio-economic divisions that saw a big proportion of the population being denied access to political and economic resources and overall decision-making processes.

4. Access to information

- Of all the impact of the digital revolution on governance, the incredible access to information that it has afforded to people across frontiers is perhaps the most potent and most widely appreciated. Now, more than ever, more people are able to access vast amount of information on the internet. They are also more able to access public
information (budgets, laws, policies, etc.), and are thereby more able to hold their
governments accountable. UNDP counts its work in this area of e-governance among its
most meaningful, as it deems information and knowledge fundamental to democratic
governance and pro-poor development.

- UNDP’s pro-poor development agenda holds that people have a right not only to basic
  services but also to public information, and that they need to have access as well to
  processes where decisions affecting their lives are made. Significantly for poor people
  and rural development, new ICTs and mobile technologies in particular, help reduce
  information gaps and restrictions inherent in marketplaces where consumers and
  producers have little means of comparing commodity prices between distant markets.
  Micro-entrepreneurs, for instance, can access market information from remote locations,
  increasing the speed of trade and reducing travel expenditures.

- The rapid development of new ICTs in the last two decades has significantly decreased
  the cost of production and reproduction of information, and wide spread of mobile and
  internet-based ICTs have opened new possibilities and spaces for informed public
deliberation. Whether through a computer that connects to the web, or a mobile device
that connects via satellite, everyone, including the marginalized and the poor, are
increasingly able to access information, seek knowledge, give input and find services
they need – from real-time market prices, to vital health information.

  - In the Philippines, UNDP has helped launch ExCHANGES (Electronic Connection
to Access and Network iNformation and kNowledge for Governance Effectiveness
and Sustainability) to help create alternative channels for the poor to exercise and
demand rights, and to ensure state institutions meet their obligations to respect,
protect and fulfil those rights. The project established multi-point e-resources (called
ExCHANGES or e-hubs) in select schools across the country and installed a
nationwide network to enable access to information for local citizens, particularly the
poor and disadvantaged in remote, impoverished areas. Hubs were equipped
with ICT tools to enable national and sub-national e-dialogues, e-campaigns and e-
trainings as well as to serve as e-information banks on democratic governance
issues with national and local content. These hubs provided citizens the opportunity
to exchange information, share knowledge, and mobilize support for issues such as
poverty, corruption, employment, and education, and have helped empower citizens
to hold their government accountable on development goals.

  - In Pakistan, UNDP supported the Strengthening Public Grievance Redress
Mechanisms (SPGRM), which aims to improve the government's redress and
response systems to enable closer alignment with the needs and expectations of
citizens. It facilitates the availability of and access to information regarding grievance
redress and service delivery mechanisms and standards. Through e-governance
tools such as SMS and voice response mechanisms, public access to the
Ombudsman is enhanced. Use of state-of-the-art technology has been instrumental
in improving service standards. A modern SMS-based 'complaints tracking system'
and an 'interactive voice response system' (IVR) have been provided for the Wafaqi
Mohtasib’s Office (Federal Ombudsman Office). In addition, the customer relations
management system was improved by introducing an upgraded IVR Call Center.
- In **Bulgaria**, UNDP has tapped its unique community-based education and cultural institution, the Chitalishta, as catalyst for spearheading civic involvement in community development. Bulgaria and UNDP implemented a programme that sought to provide relevant information and services to local people by tapping Chitalishta’s capacity to act as information intermediaries between small communities and institutions and by providing it with and through it computers, internet connectivity as well training.

5. **Policy and regulation**

- UNDP efforts in this area help support public investments to support the creation and implementation of ICT for development and e-governance policies, legislation and regulation, as well as to build the internal institutional capacities of the public entities involved in policy design, implementation and oversight.
- The new environment created in particular by new ICTs requires new governance frameworks. Thus, policy and regulation require more government action in years ahead. Private industry and social networks will be looking to government to set standards and other requirements to ensure a “level playing field” as well as ensure an environment where innovation impulses are balanced with “rights.” UNDP helps governments across regions to develop policy and legal frameworks relevant to this new environment.
- As the ICT arena constantly evolves, UNDP helps ensure that the playing field remains “level” and public investments in new ICT infrastructure (like broadband) are aligned with national priorities and focused on development goals.

- In **Gambia**, UNDP supported the development of the **National e-Government Strategy**. Gambia is one of the least developed countries (UNDP’s Human Development Report 2010 places the country at 155th rank of 177 countries, which underlines the enormous development challenges that the country faces), and its government sees its national e-government strategy as one effort to advance development goals. In support of that strategy, UNDP helped various agencies to connect with each other, to communicate and share information efficiently, and to make various key information easily accessible by both government and citizens. To these ends, **UNDP introduced the first government web portal in the country** ([www.gambia.gov.gm](http://www.gambia.gov.gm)) and developed 23 other websites for various government agencies. UNDP also helped establish the **e-Government Data Centre that serves as the single central data storage facility for the government**, helped facilitate a government email system to enhance communications across agencies and improve information sharing, and provided training on the maintenance and management of the platforms.

- In **Botswana**, UNDP supported the **e-Governance Programme**, which is an institutional review and restructuring of the administration of justice and the development of **Information and Education Strategy for e-Governance** in the country. With the design of e-government structures to enhance the administration of justice and education in Botswana, the programme also addressed change.
management and provided workshops for Deputy Permanent Secretaries from all ministries as well various line managers (including IT managers). Other efforts include the identification of a roadmap for the information and education campaign, development of publishing standards and guidelines (and the training of relevant officers on them), and the design and establishment of the e-Government portal and the Ministry of Education sub-portal (along with the training of publishers and website administrators).

- In Niger, UNDP helped develop the country’s ICT Plan for MDG Acceleration that addresses capacity building for good governance and targets acceleration of efforts towards the achievement of the MDGs. The plan involves such strategic areas as development of ICT infrastructure, ICT in poverty reduction, development of the necessary legal and regulatory framework, content development, and e-government. An e-governance project linked to this plan specifically targets five key areas: improve management of development assistance, enhance human resource management in public administration and promote access to information, promote citizen participation (particularly in CSOs addressing transparency in the management of extractive industry), improve access to judicial information by litigants, support pilot municipalities on development of ICT applications that are geared towards community management and acceleration of the MDGs at the local level. The final evaluation report of the project is noted to contribute to knowledge sharing, particularly in the use of ICTs to improve economic performance and acceleration of the MDGs at the local level. An expansion of efforts is looking into a partnership with the private sector on m-governance, which will involve the use of mobile phones to address corruption and influence-peddling as well as enable cash transfer through mobile phones. The project is also envisioning internet-connected health centers, and the promotion of youth employment through micro and small businesses.

Some lessons
- Policy environment: legislation and regulation to deal with new information management needs - keep pace with technology
- A2i and Open Government: make government data open and easily accessible through multiple channels
- Urban/Rural gaps: account for location and context
- Address basic infrastructure needs: electricity still a major challenge
- Address high cost of access
- Promote skills development and address lack of literacy
- Cultural context, be gender-sensitive
- Keep development priorities at core of ICT implementation
- Start small, adjust on the go, gradually scale up
- Use participatory methods, including in project design
- Adequate project management expertise and capacity
- Keep it simple, limit project complexity, build on existing skillsets