Expert Group Meeting on "The Future of Digital Government for
Sustainable Development in LDCs, SIDS and LLDCs"
 - Part of Preparatory Process for the United Nations E-Government Survey 2020

Session Guidance Note

Session 2

Digital Inclusion and E-Participation in SIDS, LDCs, and LLDCs

Day 1
14:30-17:30 4 June 2019

1. Background & Objective

The principle of "leaving no one behind" encompasses inclusive digital participation. E-participation is considered an important catalyst for citizen engagement and achieving the 2030 Agenda. Similarly, whiles the role of government is critical to ensure that no one is left behind in implementing the 2030 Agenda, e-participation can serve as a catalyst for greater e-inclusion and plays a key role in public engagement for innovative public delivery. E-participation is defined "as the process of engaging citizens through ICTs in policy, decision-making, and service design and delivery so as to make it participatory, inclusive, and deliberative" (United Nations, 2013)[1].

E-government enables countries to utilize digital technology in providing more efficient and innovative public services to improve accountability, effectiveness, inclusiveness, openness and transparency. Combined with other approaches, digital government and ICTs can facilitate the tailoring of service delivery solutions in a way that explicitly targets marginalized groups such as those identified in the 2030 Agenda. In short, digital government and ICTs are a game-changing enabler[2].

Countries in special situations like LDCs, SIDS and LLDCs face exceptional geopolitical realities and socio-economic dependencies, along with widespread development challenges and capacity gaps. For instance, they face multiple challenges with limited resources, capacities and access to technologies representing the poorest and weakest segment of the international community. Despite the recognition of digital government and ICTs as key enablers and multiplier of sustainable development, they, however, have not been able secure sustainable benefits through e-government as a result of the wide digital divide. It is therefore critical that LDCs, SIDs and LLDCs have the technical know-how to take advantage of the opportunity to leverage digital government to support the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Governments need to demonstrate genuine public engagements and alignment to the SDGs,

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[1] United Nations E-Government Survey (2018). Gearing E-Government to support transformation towards sustainable and resilient societies. *New York, NY: United Nations*
[2] Ibid

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including through e-participation and digital engagement modalities such as through the sharing of useful open government data, by involving civil society organizations (CSOs) in the design of people-centric public services. Examples include through formulating a new manifesto that articulates what technological changes could mean for humanity; or to develop a "Data Commons" where free and open government data and information can be globally accessed to reduce the entry barriers to world with technologies such as AI, blockchain, among others.

Against this background, this Session aims to discuss the emerging trends of digital inclusion and e-participation in delivering the 2030 Agenda and how digital inclusion can better promote inclusive public service delivery and participatory decision-making. The role of digital inclusion and e-participation in strengthening accountability and transparency as well as innovative approaches and policy initiatives for sustainable development will be discussed.

2. Main Questions to be Addressed during the Session

- What are the emerging trends of digital inclusion and e-participation in LDCs, SIDS and LLDCs in delivering the 2030 Agenda?
- How can digital inclusion better promote inclusive public service delivery and participatory decision-making, particularly in leaving no one behind? What do we already know and what are some new findings?
- How does digital inclusion and e-participation further strengthen the accountability and transparency in LDCs, SIDS and LLDCs? What do we already know and what are some new findings?
- What are some innovative approaches and policy initiatives of LDCs, SIDS and LLDCs to promote digital inclusion and e-participation for sustainable development?
- How governments can make efforts to close the digital divide? What are the dimensions and steps that countries need to take? What approaches exist already and can be built to help build the capacities to bridge the digital divide?