Meeting[1] Report

Background and Objectives

Continuing the momentum sparked by the Capacity Building Workshop held in November of 2023 in Bangkok,[2] this subsequent meeting sought to capitalize on the insights and recommendations gleaned from the extensive discussions that unfolded during the Workshop, as documented in its comprehensive report.[3] By tracking participants' progress and ongoing local e-government endeavors, particularly focusing on LOSI initiatives, and providing updates on recent developments by UN DESA since the Workshop, the meeting aimed to assess the current status of LOSI. Furthermore, it aimed to solicit feedback on recent improvements and foster collaboration to maximize the potential of the LOSI network and associated efforts. The objective of organizing this meeting was to sustain the dialogue initiated during the Workshop, engage participants who demonstrated interest in LOSI, and advance the agreed-upon next steps identified during the Workshop discussions.

Agenda

The meeting commenced with opening remarks from the Director of the Division for Public Institutions and Digital Government (DPIDG), highlighting the importance of technology in overcoming challenges and advancing local e-government. The Director recapped the Workshop's outcomes, including the local e-government toolkit launch and identified action areas for local e-government, then framed the meeting as an opportunity to address remaining challenges, strengthen collaboration, and shape LOSI's future. Following DPIDG's presentation on progress made since the Workshop, participants actively engaged in discussions on the LOSI methodology, pilots, network, and the guiding questions posed at the outset. The meeting concluded with a forward-looking discussion on future activities and events related to LOSI.

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[1] [Building on Bangkok: A Follow-up Discussion on the LOSI Capacity Building Workshop Outcomes | Public Institutions (un.org)](#)
[2] [Capacity Building Workshop on Strengthening National Capacities for Spreading Digitalization at Local Levels | Public Institutions (un.org)](#)
[3] [Capacity Building Workshop on Strengthening National Capacities for Spreading Digitalization at Local Levels Report](#)

Discussion

Prior to the roundtable discussion, the crux of the meeting, a [presentation](#) by DPIDG was given on activities carried out by the team since the Workshop and based on the Workshop participants' recommendations. These activities included an updated version of the LOSI methodology, in its beta phase, and showed a new approach to assessing cities with the newly added possibility of assessing LOSI through channel independent channels for selected questions. Other developments by the division included an outreach strategy to public officials for entities that have applied the LOSI to implement based on their needs. The team also publicized about its newly developed [local e-government course](#) available on the UN DESA Learning Center targeted for a range of stakeholders including local governments and LOSI assessors along with the launch of its national counterpart, [the National E-Government toolkit](#). Participants then proceeded to provide feedback on these various aspects presented by DPIDG along with addressing the guiding questions given by DPIDG director. The following themes underline the main areas of discussion during the meeting.

- **Outreach Strategy:**

Entering into their second round of LOSI application, representatives from Brazil's Getulio Vargas Foundation (FGV) and India's Centre for Environmental Planning and Technology (CEPT) University shared insights on enhancing outreach strategies for the LOSI initiative. They also emphasized the importance of connecting the LOSI assessment results with officials to demonstrate their utility and guide usage effectively. Participants from both countries highlighted challenges faced during the first round of LOSI but expressed optimism about achieving better responsiveness from policymakers with UN DESA's support. These participants outlined plans to conduct workshops and participate in conferences targeting local governments and public executives to disseminate LOSI results in their second round of LOSI.

- **Expanding LOSI Network and Promotion:**

Participants discussed innovative approaches to expand the LOSI network and promote its adoption. A proposed award initiative aimed to recognize assessed cities by providing certificates to showcase their rankings, which proved successful in Portugal. Another idea involved appointing LOSI ambassadors to advocate for the initiative and facilitate its application in other countries, potentially establishing a sister city concept. The discussion emphasized the need to position LOSI not just as an assessment tool but also as a development resource to improve governance for the benefit of residents.

- **Challenges and Opportunities:**

During discussions on the implementation and impact of LOSI, participants brought to light a range of challenges and opportunities. A representative from United Nations University

(UNU-EGOV) underscored the crucial need to address the disparities affecting local governments, recognizing LOSI's potential as a catalyst for development. Notably, participants highlighted the technological gaps between cities, where larger urban centers often outperform smaller ones. Moreover, the disparity in resources and funding between local and national levels, particularly acute in developing countries, was emphasized. A participant from the Institute of Rural Management of Anand advocated for greater inclusivity of rural areas within the LOSI framework, acknowledging the significant presence and needs of rural residents in online service delivery.

Addressing concerns about the rising influence of AI, participants stressed the importance of exploring its role for local governments, adapting methodologies to evolving technological landscapes while carefully weighing both risks and benefits. Proposals were made to reframe AI amongst other emerging technologies into LOSI.

Echoing other participants' sentiments, a representative from the United Arab Emirates' Telecommunications and Digital Government Regulatory Authority (TDRA) emphasized the need for a unified national-local approach, advocating for the alignment of LOSI with its national counterpart OSI (Online Service Index) rather than operating as a standalone assessment framework.

- **Knowledge Sharing and Capacity Building:**

Lastly, participants emphasized the importance of knowledge sharing and capacity building to maximize the benefits of LOSI. Participant from North Macedonia's Ss. Cyril and Methodius University expressed intentions to disseminate results and recommendations gained from the LOSI pilot to enhance understanding and utilization. The participants emphasized the value of capacity building efforts in facilitating wider participation and adoption of the LOSI globally. For instance, in response to the discrepancy within rural areas, the idea of highlighting successful use cases to improve online public services in rural areas emerged.

Another valuable suggestion from UNU-EGOV included developing a fictitious city to showcase effective LOSI implementation methods, fostering collaboration among interested cities for testing and learning purposes. This initiative would stem from collaborative efforts to create free and open-source software templates within the LOSI network, aimed at enhancing local government capacity building and assessment accuracy.

Next Steps

Building on the productive discussions and recommendations from the recent Capacity Building Workshop, there is a strong commitment to the overarching goal of enhancing people's living conditions globally through improved and inclusive local online service delivery. Further integrating effective indicators towards this goal into the LOSI framework was considered an

important and impactful tool. Additionally, a clear dedication to advancing the development of LOSI and its Network transpired throughout the meeting.

To achieve these goals, it was agreed to continuously refine the LOSI methodology by soliciting regular feedback and convening a detailed meeting on the updated methodology. This approach should ensure alignment with the evolving technological landscape while upholding inclusivity as a fundamental principle. Furthermore, there is widespread acknowledgment of the necessity to expand the LOSI network, exploring diverse methods and tools to attract new members and fully leverage the network's potential.

Efforts will also be directed towards enhancing alignment between LOSI and its national counterpart, OSI, to maintain consistency and enhance effectiveness across both frameworks.

Recognizing the valuable insights shared by participants, there is a collective commitment to establishing clear guidelines and methodologies for the outreach strategy, providing robust support for entities seeking to participate in LOSI. Moreover, the innovative ideas generated during the Workshop are actively under consideration for implementation.

Lastly, as part of the ongoing commitment to e-government development, there is contemplation regarding organizing a workshop on e-government capacity building. This prospective workshop, potentially coinciding with the upcoming ICEGOV conference from 1-4 October 2024 in Pretoria, South Africa, aims to serve as a platform for knowledge exchange, fostering dynamic discussions on LOSI and sharing advancements in local and national e-government practices. Additionally, it will provide a valuable opportunity for entities undergoing LOSI pilot applications to showcase their results and findings upon completion.

Background readings

UN DESA (2022). Chapter 3 Local E-Government Development. UN E-Government Survey 2022

Capacity Building Workshop on Strengthening National Capacities for Spreading Digitalization at Local Levels Report

Application of the Local Online Service Index (LOSI) Methodology in Countries

Local E-Government Toolkit Page

National E-Government Toolkit Page